Immortal Fighter of 1857

TATYA TOPE

Harikrishna Devsare

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Viren Verma

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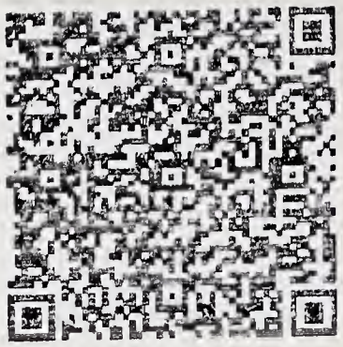

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PREFACE

The 150th anniversary of the great freedom struggle of 1857 makes us remember sacrifices of those warriors and brave men who dedicated their every thing for the country's freedom and we do not know even their names. After paying homage to and remembering thousands, lakhs of such martyrs, we have to perform our duty by vowing that we will neither allow country's freedom, unity and integrity to be subjected again by a foreign power nor will we let the traitors fulfil their evil intentions.

The great freedom struggle of 1857 and the ballad of its brave leaders and warriors is such a golden page of our history that cannot be erased in centuries. The heroic tales of those brave men, warriors and revolutionary leaders were presented in a distorted manner by British historians, especially in Government reports and books of British rule. What has been painful is that even in this act there was cooperation by Indians. In support of their British counterparts, many Indian historians refused to take 1857 as even a freedom struggle and describing it, like the British, a mutiny or a 'soldiers' uprising', they did not spare anything to undermine its dignity. But those British historians who wrote impartially have admitted that the secret organisation that had been raised to achieve freedom and the plan of revolution were so forceful that had it been flared up on the same day, same time and under one leadership, it would have been impossible for the British to stay on for another day in India. Therefore, it is necessary to look back with an analytical frame of mind at the history of our freedom struggle even 150 years after it took place. And there is need to bring forth all those facts of history that had been lost to us till now and also that the true character of those brave men of freedom struggle who were vilified and conspired against by the British is presented and also to underline the importance of their role in the freedom struggle.

Tatya Tope was one among the great brave men, Army chiefs, warriors and patriotic leaders of 1857 struggle who had not surrendered himself before the British till the end. He did not let his cap bowed till his last breath—the jewel-studded cap which was put on his head in his childhood by Bajirao Peshwa in commendation of bravery. He fell victim to treachery, which was characteristic of Indians engaged in 1857 freedom struggle and of which the British rulers made full use to consolidate their position in India. Had he not been a victim of treachery, it was impossible for the British to capture him.

Tatya Tope had been endowed with amazing bravery, ability to lead an army and far-sight. All aspects of his life have been covered extensively in this book as in many books written on 1857 freedom struggle many important facts regarding his courage, qualities of an army chief, art of war and sacrifice for freedom have not been mentioned for whatever reasons. I have, therefore endeavoured that all authentic material relating to this great warrior, that may be available, be presented through this book before the public. I express my gratitude to the reference books I have relied upon for support in this regard. These are : 'Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj : Pandit Sunderlal; 'Tatya Tope' : Indumati Shewde; 'Tatya Tope' : Dr. Bhagwan Singh Rana; '1857' : Surendranath Sen; '1857 Ka Swatantrata Sangram' : Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Finally, I express my gratitude towards Publications Division, Government of India, who have implemented the scheme under which separate books on leading figures of freedom struggle are being published on the occasion of 150th anniversary of the freedom struggle of 1857. This will acquaint readers with thrilling, inspiring, authentic historical information. Publications Division deserves applause for this great scheme.

— Hari Krishna Devsare

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Early Life

Tatya Tope was such an Army chief of 1857 freedom struggle who waged war with Britishers for a long time and made their life hell. Tatya Tope was one of those great army chiefs who had extraordinary ability in the art of war and art of using weapons. He fought indefatigably to save the country from Britishers' subjugation and displayed extraordinary valour. He was such an army chief whose efficient military operation, positioning of forces and farsightedness have been praised by even British historians. Col. Malleson writes about Tatya Tope's army—"No army in the world has ever marched so swiftly as the Indian Army of Tatya Tope was marching on this occasion." In praise of the Army chief Tatya Tope, Col. Malleson has written—"India had produced the most brilliant Army chief in the form of Tatya Tope during those critical times. It is impossible to praise fully the resoluteness and patience with which he executed his plans."

The real name of Tatya Tope was—'Ramchandra Panduranga Yewlekar.' Quoting a statement given by Tatya in 1859, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar writes—"My name is Tatya Tope. My father's name is Panduranga and I belong to the village Yewle, subdivision Paloda of district Nagar. I reside in Bithur and my age is about forty five years and I am in the service of Nana Saheb." (*'Atharah Sou Sattavan Ka Swatantrata Sangram' : P./175*). The exact date of birth of Tatya is not known. But, according to the statement given by Tatya in 1859 the year of his birth should be 1813 or 1814.

Marathi scholar Shriniwas Balaji Hardikar writes—"In the written statement that Tatya Tope had placed before the court during his trial in 1859, he had mentioned his age to be 45 years. On this basis the year of Tatya's birth should be 1814. This year of his birth is also confirmed by his family members. Tatya's nephew Narayan Laxman and Tatya's niece Gangubai reside in Brahmavart (ancient name of Bithur). They say that it was often said in their family that when Panduranga had come to Brahmavart (Bithur) with the Peshwa in 1819, Ramchandra was 4 years of age and his younger brother Gangadhar was a two-year old. The traditional statement of this family also proves that Tatya was born in 1814 only. Therefore it seems proper to regard this year as the year of his birth."

Tatya's father Panduranga Tryambak Bhat was a Deshastha (non-Konkani) Brahmin. He was a profound scholar of Vedas and Smritis (a body of 'remembered' knowledge as distinct from 'revealed' knowledge of Vedas). But, it was becoming difficult for him to maintain his family in Yewle. In Yewle he worked as a priest in the village Chief Sardar Vinchurkar's house. But it was getting difficult to subsist on the income from priesthood alone. One day Panduranga Bhat met the special courtier of Peshwa Bajirao (second), Tryambakji Dengle and told him about his hardships. Peshwa Bajirao (second) was a religious man. Hence, Tryambakji saw a ray of hope in his heart. He asked Panduranga to come and stay in Pune with his family. And he came to Pune with his family.

Bajirao (second) respected scholars and spiritual leaders very much. He was very much pleased to meet Panduranga Bhat. Seeing his skill in Vedic methods and Karmakand (religious ceremonies). Bajirao issued orders that henceforth all religious rites and worship etc. in his family would be

performed by Panduranga Bhat. Due to this appointment Panduranga's family had a happy life in Pune. But within a few days bad time surrounded Peshwa Bajirao. Although he had good relations with Britishers intentions of the latter were not good. They wanted to somehow usurp the Maratha state. Tension increased from both sides. Elphinston has written under the heading 'Fifteen years in India' in his diary—"On 5th November 1817 a fierce battle took place between the forces of Britishers and the Peshwa at a place named Kharaki near Pune. Bapu Gokhale was the chief of Peshwa's army. But nothing among Gokhale's patriotism, his military tactics or his valour worked. By the 'grace' of traitors like Balaji Pant Natu and Yashwantrao Ghorpade Peshwa's army was broken into pieces. They not only conveyed all news of this side at every step to Britishers, they were doing their utmost to make Gokhale's efforts unsuccessful. The result was victory of Britishers in the battle of Kharaki and Peshwa Bajirao had to make a retreat with Bapu Gokhale and some of his troops. After this there were many clashes on smaller scale between the forces of Peshwa and the Company in which some times that side won and some times this side. In one of these battles Bapu Gokhale became a martyr and that further broke the spirit of Peshwa Bajirao. Under compulsion Bajirao talked to Sir John Malcom in June 1818 about a truce. Even at that time Bajirao had about six thousand mounted men and five thousand foot soldiers with him. The fort of Asirgarh was also in his possession till now. Eventually. Sir John Malcom suggested a pension of rupees eight lakhs per annum for Bajirao in his letter written to the Governor General. He wrote—"If Bajirao is imprisoned people will have sympathy with him and hope will remain in Marathas' hearts that Bajirao would run away from jail one day and would try to free the country once again. But if Bajirao resigns of his

own will after dismissing his army, it would make a better impression on people for us." (*'Life of Malcom' : Sir John K., Vol. 2, P./24*).

Thereafter, "Governor-General accepted this proposal and sanctioning a pension of Rs. eight lakhs per annum to Bajirao, he was sent to a place Bithur on the bank of Ganga near Kanpur." (*'Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj', Vol. 2 : Sunderlal*).

A large number of Peshwa Bajirao's servants and loyal courtiers also came with him. Peshwa's trusted men Moropant and Panduranga Bhat were also there among these people. Bajirao Peshwa got a big palace constructed in Bithur.

Panduranga Bhat settled in Bithur with his wife Rukmabai and two children. That time Tatya's age was four years and his younger brother Gangadhar's two years. Only a few years had passed in Bithur and suddenly Tatya's mother Rukmabai died. How will the two young children be brought up ? Bajirao Peshwa arranged second marriage of Panduranga with Mathurabai, the daughter of Jejurkar who also worked under the Peshwa. Mathura gave birth to seven children-six of whom were sons and one daughter. Their names were—Raghunath, Ramkrishna, Laxman, Baijnath, Sadasiv and Vinayak. Daughter's name was—Durga.

In Bithur Panduranga Bhat was made chief of Bajirao's Department of Charities. Hence, his prestige in Peshwa's court had enhanced. The way Peshwa Bajirao was bringing up his family, in the same way he was also looking after families of Moropant and Panduranga Bhat. This was the reason why children of Peshwa Bajirao and Moropant's daughter Manu and Panduranga's son Tatya studied and learned other skills together.

Bajirao Peshwa married six times in Pune. Eventually, when they came to Bithur, only two wives came with him,

whose names were-Varanasi and Saraswati. After reaching Bithur also, Bajirao married several times but he had no issue from any of them. Finally, under compulsion he had to adopt Govindrao, the son of Madhav Narayan Bhat, who belonged to the same Gotra as was his own. Peshwa named him 'Dhundiraj' which later became 'Dhundhupant'. Thereafter, Bajirao also adopted Dhundiraj's elder brother Gangadhar and Sadashiv, the nephew of Madhav Narayan. But Dhundiraj remained the heir to the throne, although he was younger to Gangadhar and Sadashiv. Gangadhar got the name 'Dada Sahab' and Sadashiv 'Bala Sahab'. Since he was younger than these two Dhundiraj got the name 'Nana Saheb'. Later, Dada Saheb died. Manubai was twenty years younger than Tatya Tope and ten years younger than Nana Saheb. Even so, Bajirao had arranged to impart education to them together. When they grew up to adolescence they were also trained in the art of war. Nana Saheb and Bala Saheb regarded Manu as their sister. Tatya too, despite being much older than Manu, regarded her his sister.

Tatya's younger brother Gangadhar called him 'Tatya' because he was very thin and quick tempered. This nickname of childhood of Ramchandra Panduranga Yewlekar continued till his adolescence. One day the test of these royal children in archery was scheduled to be held. By chance, Bajirao Peshwa also reached there. Nana Saheb, Balaji, Baba Bhat, Manubai and Tatya—all five were ready to go through the test.

The test of archery began. Each of them was given five arrows and they were expected to hit the target placed before them. Both Baba Bhat and Bala Saheb hit the target twice. Nana Saheb hit the target thrice. But Manubai hit the target four times. Only one arrow was wasted. Finally came the turn of Tatya. All five arrows of him hit the target. Everybody

clapped in jubilation. Bajirao Peshwa got up and patted the back of this child and gave him some rupees as prize. But the boy returned money and said—"I want your blessings only. It is your goodself who is bringing me up."

"Take it, Tatya. Thou beat all of us." Nana Saheb said.

"Nana ? By which name did you call him ? Isn't his name Ramchandra ?" Bajirao asked.

"Yes, my full name is Ramchandra Panduranga Yewlekar." Tatya said.

"But Anna, we call him Tatya in affection." And this name came into circulation for all.

Gradually, Nana Saheb, Manubai, Tatya all grew up. But their operating weapons, playing, living together never stopped. Then Manubai got married to the king of Jhansi, Gangadhar Rao. On the other hand, Tatya's father died. Bajirao entrusted the charge of Home department to Tatya. Tatya worked very honestly in this department. Being pleased with his work one day Bajirao honoured Tatya in the court by putting a costly cap, studded with nine diamonds, on his head. After this, people started calling him 'Tatya Topi' which later became 'Tope'.

Tatya was thin alright but his personality was domineering in a special way. In his book, 'Wandering in India and other sketches of Life in Hindustan' the British author John Lang has described his meeting with Tatya in Bithur. He has written in it about his personality and physical features—"He was of average height, about five feet eight inches and lean. He was not good looking but his face reflected resoluteness of his personality. His forehead was small, nose was somewhat broad near the nostrils and teeth were asymmetrical. His eyes were attractive but very vigilant as Asian people commonly have."

Similarly, when a correspondent of 'Bombay Times' met Tatya after the latter's arrest he wrote in its issue of 18th April 1849 that "Tatya is neither handsome nor ugly but he is intelligent. He is a quiet man with a balanced disposition. His health is good and has an average height."

"According to some more information that we could get, Tatya's eyebrows were stretched, cheek bones prominent and jaws broad. All these indicated his resolute intelligent mind. His hair was thick and curly. Moustache thick and long. He knew Marathi, Urdu and Gujarati well. He could speak fluently in these languages. He was only able to put his signature in English. He spoke haltingly but clearly and in few and measured words. But his expression had the quality of attracting listeners. It is said that Tatya used to make enemies due to his eloquence." (*'Tatya Tope': Indumati Shewde, N.B.T. P./5 and 6*).

By sending Bajirao second to Bithur, Britishers had ended Peshwa's rule in a way that he could not even imagine to establish his rule again. In fact, Bajirao had become a puppet in the hands of Britishers. It was a different matter that his dealings with Britishers always remained truthful. Historians believe that Bajirao Peshwa (second) was an unskilled player on political, chessboard. Hence, he cannot be called a brave man. But even British historians have praised his truthfulness, his religiosity and his ability as a general administrator. With the pension amount of Rs. eight lakhs he bore the expenses on running the families of his subordinates. Thus, even after having been dethroned, he kept ruling in Bithur without crown for full 32 years. On 28th January 1851, at the age of 75 years, he died. That time, only his two adopted sons, Nana Saheb Dhundhupant and Bala Saheb were alive. Since the time he had come to Bithur, a British Resident Commissioner was

appointed whose job was to keep an eye on the activities of Bajirao Peshwa and to report every month to the Company government.

Peshwa Bajirao (second) had declared, as early as ten years before his death, Nana Saheb his heir. Bajirao Peshwa had signed this succession letter on 30th June, 1841 and the Resident Commissioner of Bithur, Menson and other reputed courtiers were present there at that time as witness. All these people had also signed on this paper. It was stated in this succession letter—"After my death all facilities available to me should be available to Nana Saheb. This declaration is being written so that it is revealed and known to all concerned in the British government and the Company government that my elder son Dhundhupant Nana will be fully entitled and owner of the title of Peshwa, affairs of Bithur, reign, wealth, Buildings etc. and by tradition, his sons and grandsons will consume the authority and wealth of the state." A copy of this succession letter was sent to the Company government. But the game of eliminating the remaining glory of Peshwa- dom was to start now.

The Bugle of Revolt

After demise of Bajirao Peshwa (second) Nana Dhundhupant Peshwa was installed in the royal throne of 'Peshwas' and consecrated as per established rules and ordinances and was given the dynastic sword for his custody after putting the traditional turban of Peshwas on his head. Thereafter, Nana Saheb duly wrote a letter to the government and demanded that since he had become a Peshwa by virtue of his being the heir of Bajirao Peshwa (second), the annual pension received by the former Peshwa Bajirao be given to him now.

By then Lord Dalhousie had come to India as Governor-General of East India Company. It is said about him that he was a fanatically imperialist Englishman. He found a good excuse for implementing his expansionist policy in the fact that most rulers of Indian princely states had no sons. So he banned the religious tradition of Indian rulers who had no son to adopt a child. His expansionist intention is revealed by this statement of him—"If some princely states were found to be devoid of an heir, those be annexed to the Company's rule after occupying them—there being a proper opportunity to do so. There may or may not be an heir of a state or there may be an arrangement of declaring someone an heir after adopting him as per Hindu scriptures, given an opportunity, a lapse of letting both the opportunities go out of hand should never be committed." And under this policy, he refused to accept Nana Dhundhupant Peshwa as an heir of Bajirao after the latter's death and stopped Bajirao's pension. Dalhousie had written in his reply—"Bajirao Peshwa has drawn pension for a long

period of thirty three years. Thus, he had already received more than Rs. two and a half crore. He has left property worth Rs. twenty eight lakhs behind for his family members. According to law his family members have no claim on this endowment pension. The wealth left behind by him for his family members is enough for them."

After occupying the throne of Peshwa, Nana Dhundhupant had appointed Tatya Tope as his Head Munshi. From then onwards people had started calling Tatya as 'Musahib' (a favourite of the king). After refusal of Lord Dalhousie to give pension to Nana, it was decided to appeal to higher authorities of the Company government. Ajimullah Khan was sent to England for this purpose. But the Company government was not prepared to hear anything and it rejected the appeal. Ajimullah Khan returned to India but he had returned with the idea of revolution.

Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope, Rao Saheb, Baba Bhat etc. sat together for a meeting. Deliberations were held on political situation of the country and it was decided that if revolution was attempted at that time throughout the country, Britishers would have to leave India. Besides preparing for revolution these leaders also considered the conditions that could be helpful in inflaming the fire of revolution. Historians have pointed out five main reasons for the 1857 revolution. First reason was—continuous ill-treatment of Delhi's emperor by Britishers. In fact, Britishers had succeeded in exerting enough pressure on the emperor of Delhi. When the last emperor of Mughal dynasty Bahadurshah Zafar sent proposal to Britishers to increase the amount of his expenses, an indifferent reply was given to him. Britishers wrote that if you transfer the remaining rights of yourself and your descendants to the Company government, the amount of your expenses will be increased. Bahadurshah did not accept this. This caused more hatred and dissatisfaction towards Britishers in hearts of

Delhi's population. Second reason was—continued atrocities on the Nawab and people of Awadh. British historian John K. has written that lakhs of peasants of thousands of villages of Awadh wept after hearing about ill-treatment of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah and his family members. Thousands of villagers expressed sympathy with their homeless landlords and talukedars. Most Hindustani soldiers of Company's forces belonged to Awadh. Hence Lord Dalhousie's atrocities on people of Awadh had sown seeds of deep dissatisfaction both in entire Awadh region and Company's forces. Third reason was Lord Dalhousie's extensive policy of usurpation. Deep dissatisfaction pervaded the entire country due to annexation of princely states of Satara, Punjab, Jhansi, Nagpur, Sambalpur etc. A member of Madras Council, John Sullivan has written—"Whenever a princely state is usurped, after removing its ruler, a Britisher is appointed in his place. The old small court there disappears, trading activities of that place become slack, its capital becomes desolate, people become poor, Britishers prosper and after sucking the wealth on banks of Ganga it is wrung out on banks of Thames." (*'A Plea for the princes of India' : John Sullivan, Member, Madras Council, P./67*). Fourth reason was-injustice to Nana Saheb. Although historians write that despite this Nana maintained cordial relations with Britishers. But, when his appeal was rejected, hatred towards Britishers was created in his heart and he started thinking of getting out of their net. Fifth reason was-attempts to convert Indians to Christianity.

This pervading dissatisfaction with Britishers all over India gave birth to the idea of revolution. In Bithur, Ajimullah Khan and Tatya Tope were busy preparing outline of the future revolution with Nana Saheb. Tatya Tope was a farsighted man. His thinking was that our revolutionary organisation should be raised under the flag of the old emperor Bahadurshah and all Hindus and Muslims should be included in it, without

discrimination. Then this organisation should prepare such a plan that the Bugle of revolt against Britishers be blown all over the country at the same time, same day.

Thus, Bithur became the headquarter of the revolutionary organisation. Secret letters were sent from here to rulers of princely states all over the country. Special envoys and propagators of Nana started touring all places in India. Gradually, five cities developed as centres of revolution—Delhi, Bithur, Lucknow, Calcutta and Satara. To orient these centres to a single target Nana Saheb set out on a 'pilgrimage' with his brother Bala Saheb, Tatya Tope and Ajimulla Khan. His aim was to determine the date of revolution in the country. These people first reached Delhi and held secret meetings with the emperor Bahadurshah to deliberate on the plan of revolution. Then they went to Ambala. Thereafter, they reached Lucknow via many places. Nana Saheb was received with great honour there and a procession was taken out for him.

It is worth mentioning here that whereas Nana Saheb appeared to strengthen his relations with Britishers, Tatya Tope, Ajimullah Khan, etc. gave secret messages about revolution. This was the reason why Britishers had no inkling of Nana Saheb's plan. Be that as it may, during this journey, Nana Saheb fixed Sunday, the 31st May 1857 as the day of revolution. This date was communicated throughout country with the help of spies.

But in the meantime cartridges covered by suet acted as dynamite. What had happened was that in 1853 the Company got a new type of cartridges manufactured for its Indian forces. Factories were opened at many places to manufacture these cartridges. One factory was also opened near Barrackpur. The earlier cartridges were required to be opened by soldiers with their hands. But now the security seal over these new cartridges had to be cut open with the help of their teeth. One day a Brahmin soldier of Damdam was going towards his Barrack

with a small round pot in his hand. A sweeper stopped him and asked for his pot to drink water. Thinking that the pot will be polluted, the soldier refused to give him the pot. Then that sweeper said—"Now give up the ideas of caste and untouchability. Don't you know that soon you will have to cut with your teeth the cartridges covered with tallow of cow and pig. These two things are being added deliberately in the new cartridges being manufactured now." As soon as he heard this, the Brahmin soldier was enraged and after reaching his barrack told other soldiers on top of his voice—"Suet-covered curtridges will be given to us now to corrupt our religion. We will never allow it to happen." But some soldiers kept patience and they went to meet British officers. British officers told them that this rumour was quite untrue and there was nothing like that in new cartridges. Soldiers were not convinced yet. When they inquired from the Indian workers working in the Barrackpur factory, truth came out. They were told that it was true that both these things were added to the new cartridges. Whereas according to Hindu and Islamic religions touching both these things to mouth is prohibited. As soon as they came to know of this truth, soldiers of Barrackpur spread the news throughout India. Within two months thousands of letters containing this information were sent from Barrackpur to as far off places as Peshawar and Maharashtra. The result was that every Hindu and Muslim soldier became rebellious and impatient to take revenge of this injustice that involved their religion. But their leaders in cantonments asked them to keep quiet till 31st May. Although it was rather difficult but warning the soldiers that a premature action would upset the whole plan, leaders kept them in check.

News about the cartridges also reached Nana Saheb and his advisor Tatya Tope in Bithur. They were worried lest revolution commenced before time. Tatya Tope immediately sent his spies off in disguise of Sadhus and Faqeers so that they go in prominent cantonments and explain to soldiers that

it was easy to revolt but it was possible to take it far and achieve some results only if it is begun at right time. Thus one cantonment after the other was informed that any hasty action could go wrong.

Tatya Tope was a very farsighted man. He had spread the net of spies all over India in such a way that he used to get all news—though it was a different matter that due to lack of means of communication it took some time for news to reach him. But, in how amazing way the plan of revolution was made can be guessed from this excerpt from the book 'Western India' written by a British author Sir George Lee Grand Jacob—"The amazingly secret manner in which the whole conspiracy was carried out, the foresight that was used while planning, the utmost care with which various groups of this organisation worked with each other that one group could have no inkling of men belonging to other groups and they were given only that much information which was absolutely necessary for them—all this is difficult to describe. Above all, they showed amazing loyalty towards each other."

The plan of revolution was controlled by Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope and Ajimullah Khan from Bithur. Describing the reason for secretly operating this plan, historians write : "Policemen in most Police stations, many government servants and even cooks and water-carriers of Britishers were involved in this national plan. Occasionally, Britishers caught some propagators but they wriggled out cleanly. A British historian writes that once a Faqeer was camping near the Meerut cantonment. He was propagating the revolution. Britishers drove him out. Riding an elephant, that Faqeer went to a nearby village and continued his work from there." (*'The Meerut Narratives' : Williams*). These Political faqeers were often provided with elephants for riding and armed sepoys for defence. Awareness of revolution had reached to such an extent that open prayers were conducted in Kashi, Prayag and

Haridwar for the elimination of British rule and thousands of pilgrims took oath to participate in the future revolution. Operators of revolution took full advantage of Tamashas, Pawaras, Lavnis (folk shows and songs), Puppets, dramas etc. (*'Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj' : Sunderlal, P./824*). Thus, operators of revolution tried their utmost that revolution took place at the same time on 31st May, 1857 all over the country. All arrangements be made before that date, about which Britishers should have no inkling. But suet-coated cartridges had caused apprehension in minds of operators of revolution lest some explosion took place somewhere that may alert Britishers.

In February 1857 new cartridges were given for use to the 19th Regiment of Barrackpur. But soldiers refused to use those cartridges. This was a warning to Britishers. They thought that if soldiers were not punished for this indiscipline it will convey a wrong message to the whole country. At that time there was no British regiment in the entire Bengal. Hence, a white regiment was immediately called in from Burma (now Myanmar). British officers had intended to dismiss soldiers of the 19th regiment after they put in their arms on arrival of the white regiment. But Indian soldiers got to know of their intentions. They decided that why not start the revolution instead of putting in arms. But this caused some rift among them. Indian officers of the soldiers were of the view that we should hold back till the 31st May.

It would be appropriate to mention here that clear instructions were issued that before starting revolution bungalows and barracks of Britishers would be set on fire. Soldiers of Barrackpur were seething with anger. They were somehow held back. But it was becoming difficult for some soldiers to suppress for whole night the fire of revolution that had been inflamed in their hearts. It was the night of 28th

March 1857 when a secret meeting of soldiers of the 19th regiment was held.

On 29th March 1857, the 19th regiment was called at Parade Ground. As soon as the regiment came and stood there, a soldier Mangal Pande jumped out of line with his loaded gun. He invoked fellow soldiers on top of his voice to start revolution. He said that time had come to wage a holy war against Britishers.

At that time British officer Sergeant Major Huson was present on Parade Ground. He ordered other soldiers to arrest Mangal Pande. But no soldier obeyed his order. The next moment, Mangal Pande fired at Sergeant Major Huson and killed him. At the same time another British officer Lieutenant Vaugh reached there on his horse. Mangal Pande fired at him also. But, even after getting injured Lt. Vaugh got up, took out his pistol and fired at Mangal Pande. By chance he missed the target. Now Mangal Pande took out his sword and killed Lt. Vaugh. Mangal Pande was grunting with passion. At that very time the third British officer Colonel Wheeler came there. He ordered soldiers from a distance to arrest Mangal Pande. But no soldier moved forward. Then Col. Wheeler immediately went back to cantonment. He came back with General Heyer and a few British soldiers. Seeing this, Mangal Pande shot at his own chest and a wounded Pande fell down. White soldiers immediately arrested him. Mangal Pande was court martialled and on 8th April 1857 he was hanged.

After Mangal Pande was hanged, as soon as information about the above incident was received soldiers of the 19th and the 34th regiments were asked to put in their arms and were dismissed. The Captain of 34th regiment was arrested and was hanged because secret meetings used to be held at his house. Despite all these incidents leaders of revolution kept patience and they did not allow any action of revolt before the appointed date 31st May 1857.

Victory and Defeat in Fierce Fighting

6th May 1857. There was a company of ninety Indian cavaliers in Meerut. As an experiment the new type of suet-coated cartridges were given to cavaliers of this company. These cartridges were to be used after cutting them with teeth. All cavaliers were asked to load them in guns. But eighty five out of ninety cavaliers refused to cut cartridges with teeth. Thereupon all these cavaliers were imprisoned and court martialled. They were punished with eight to ten years' imprisonment for disobeying the orders.

9th May 1857. All the 85 cavaliers were made to stand on Parade Ground. British historian Sir John K. writes that, "All 85 guilty soldiers were made to stand before the Artillery of British army. That day the remaining soldiers of the cantonment were specially made to stand on Parade Ground so that they could see the consequence of disobeying orders. First, those 85 soldiers were made to take off their uniforms. Then they were handcuffed and fettered while they stood there. Then they were made to walk with fetters upto the prison. Seeing this scene thousands of their fellow soldiers were filled with sorrow and remorse because they considered those soldiers innocent. They were under compulsion to keep quiet because three weeks were yet to go before the start of revolution."

In evening of the same day, when the remaining Indian soldiers of Meerut came out in market and the city, women

cursed and reproached them at many places saying, "Shame on you ! Your brothers are in prison and you are whiling your time here in market ? Shame on you for being alive !" These words of women broke the barrier of patience of these soldiers. Now they were not prepared to hold back. Preparations were made in the night itself and revolution took place in Meerut cantonment on 10th May 1857.

It was Sunday on 10th May 1857. Hindus and Muslims, foot soldiers and cavaliers, soldiers of Artillery ran out in Meerut cantonment and city to kill Britishers. After breaking walls of prison, fetters of prisoners were cut and they were taken in the fold of revolutionary force. Bungalows and offices were set on fire. Railway line was occupied by the revolutionary force. Running for their life, Britishers hid in some hospitals and homes of their Indian servants. A number of British men, women and children were killed. After eliminating Britishers in Meerut city and cantonment the whole day, the revolutionary army marched to Delhi on that night itself. They reached Delhi at 8 o'clock in the morning on 11th May. Revolutionary forces killed British soldiers and officers present in Delhi. Thereafter, they went to emperor Bahadurshah Zafar and gave him salutation of 21 guns. Revolutionary forces declared Bahadurshah as their leader. By 16th May 1857 Delhi was completely free from Britishers. Wherever news of revolution in Meerut and Delhi reached, revolution inflamed before 31st May.

All the news reached Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope in Bithur on 15th May. What they had apprehended, happened. Britishers became alert due to flaring up of revolution before the due date. All three British historians—Malleson, White and Wilson—have agreed that the pre-mature flaring up of revolution in Meerut proved lucky for Britishers and

disadvantageous for Indian revolutionaries. Malleson has written clearly that had the war of freedom in India begun in unison on the predetermined date, not a single Englishman would have survived and British rule in India would have ended then only. Historian J.C. Wilson has written that the fact of the matter is that women of Meerut city saved the British rule by inciting soldiers before time. Even so, once the revolt broke out in Meerut a terrible fire had engulffed the whole of India. (*'Official Narratives' : J.C. Wilson*).

The promoters of revolution themselves were astonished by the speed with which flames of revolution had spread. Nana Saheb was about to declare revolution by raising his sword when some British forces reached Kanpur from Lucknow. Sir Hugh Wheeler was the Commander of this British force in Kanpur. There were three thousand Indian soldiers and about a hundred British soldiers under his command. Wheeler got the news about Delhi's independence on 18th May. On getting this news he started defensive activities by encircling a new place south of Ganga, so that Britishers could take shelter there at the time of need. On this side, Nana Saheb wanted no action till the 31st May.

Tatya Tope did not agree with this decision of Nana Saheb. Although Tatya was a subordinate of Nana Saheb but, in his opinion, it was not proper to sit back under the circumstances that had been developed. Tatya's stand was— "This is the time to raise sword. Whatever was to happen, has happened. When flames of revolution are spreading, we have to direct them in such a way that we may derive maximum advantage. We were the persons who propagated the plan of revolution devoting more than year on this and made people prepared for it. Our keeping quiet till 31st May would now mean that we are not cooperating with revolutionaries and

being treacherous to them just when they need our help most. That would weaken their morale. We should not delay anymore."

In the meantime, Nana Saheb received a message from Wheeler. Britishers still regarded Nana Saheb their friend and a loyalist. In the message, Nana Saheb was asked to come and defend Kanpur. Now it became impossible for Nana Saheb to sit back in Bithur. On 22nd May 1857 Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope reached Kanpur. Nana had some force and only two guns with him. As soon as Nana reached Kanpur, Wheeler placed the Company's treasury at his disposal. Nana posted his two hundred soldiers to guard the treasury. At that time, Company's Indian forces had two main leaders—Subedar Tika Singh and Subedar Shamsuddin Khan. Britishers residing in Kanpur were so much scared at that time that on hearing even a false rumour, all Britishers in the city ran with their families to General Wheeler's fort and assembled there. Sir Hugh Wheeler had also placed store-room of Company's ammunition in the custody of Nana Saheb.

It was midnight of 4th June 1857. Till then, everything was quiet in Kanpur. General Wheeler was without worry due to Nana Saheb. Suddenly, Kanpur cantonment was reverberated with the sound of three gunshots. Messages had been sent to soldiers that three such shots would be an indication of start of revolution. Thus, Indian soldiers had declared the onset of revolution. They had set out from their respective barracks with weapons. Tatya Tope was encouraging them. Mounted on a horse, subedar Tika Singh led them from cantonment. Hundreds of mounted men and thousands of foot soldiers followed him. As they had been instructed—They set Britishers' Bungalows and offices on fire at many places. At many places flags of British government were brought down

and green flags of Bahadurshah Zafar were unfurled. At that time Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope, Ajimullah Khan were camping in Nawabganj of Kanpur. Tatya Tope was keeping a vigilant eye on every activity and was issuing instructions about actions to be followed.

5th June 1857. In early morning Britishers' treasury and Artillery, both had come under the possession of revolutionary forces. By the morning people in jubilation, had also come on the side of revolutionary forces. They came to Nana Saheb and chose him their king, under Delhi's emperor Bahadurshah. Thereafter a procession of the flag of Delhi's emperor, waving on top of an elephant, was taken out with great pomp on roads all over the city and the cantonment.

By that time almost all British men, women and children had taken shelter in Wheeler's fort. On 6th June, Nana Saheb gave warning to General Wheeler to vacate the fort by the same evening. He was warned of an attack on the fort in case he failed to do so. At that time, about nine hundred people were hiding in the fort. Half of these were women and children, four hundred were capable of fighting ; 90 Britishers were feeble. There were some servants. Although Britishers' spirits were high, they had enough ammunition too but there were less food items. For drinking, there was a lone water well without a safety wall around it.

It was summer time in June. Kanpur fort was attacked under the leadership of Tatya Tope. Nana Saheb had enough guns. As soon as those guns fired at the fort, bullets were continually rained from the other side. Only four hundred fighting Britishers inside the fort and surrounding them were three thousand revolutionary soldiers. Still, Wheeler was not prepared to yield to them.

Tatya Tope completed the entrenchment by getting more guns and ammunition from the British Artillery. At that time they also had some experienced officers of Bengal Army who were efficient in the art of disposition. These were—subedar Tika Singh, Jamadar Durgajan Singh and Gangadin and Commander Jwala Prasad. For meeting expenses of war Tatya had also got the support of a local rich Muslim Nanhe alias Mohammed Ali Khan. He was also made the Commander of Artillery. Tatya's strength further increased when a number of Landlords in the vicinity sent money and their armed guards. That enhanced the spirit of revolutionary forces.

"Tatya Tope did not waste time in attacking the British fort. Guns were brought from Armoury and the fort was attacked at 10 o'clock in morning on 6th June. The entrenchment was surrounded by artillery and soldiers had taken position on other buildings, bungalows and boundary wall in the vicinity. First direct attack was made on 12th June. But a fitting reply was given by the enemy side with its rash firing. Then the strategy of incessant heavy bombarding and to silence the firing from the enemy side, was adopted. Heavy bombarding caused devastation in the enemy camp. Due to dwindling resources and rapid loss of soldiers Britishers did not feel that they would be able to survive for long." (*'Tatya Tope' : Indumati Shewde, N.B.T., P./26*).

The scene of devastation inside Wheeler's fort has been described like this : "Inside the fort, Britishers were dying so quickly that it became difficult to arrange their burial. The wall inside the fort was bombarded by Nana's army in such a way that many Britishers started floundering out of thirst. This bombarding went on for twenty one days. Those who survived bombing fell victim of dysentery, fever and cholera. Due to guarding by revolutionaries it became difficult for Britishers

to send any message. Even so, a loyal Indian servant of the Company reached Lucknow with a message of General Wheeler. This message was tied to a bird's foot—"Help ! Help ! Send help to us, otherwise we will die. If we get help, we will come to Lucknow and save it." (*'Bharat mein Angrezi Raj' : Sunderlal P./852*).

People's enthusiasm was a treat to watch—the way Tatya Tope had handled the military operation. At the same time when encirclement of the British fort was continuing, Nana Saheb also set the law and order situation in the city right so that none be inconvenienced. On one hand, Nana Saheb made Subedar Tika Singh the General and Jamadars Durgajan Singh and Gangadin colonels, he called a meeting of many important people of the city on the other and after extensive consultations entrusted the responsibility of governance to various people. Hulas Singh was appointed as Chief Judge. The responsibility of supplying food items to the forces was given to a man named Mulla. For hearing civil suits, a court, comprising of trusted men of Nana Saheb—Jwala Prasad, Ajimullah Khan and Baba Saheb—was formed.

At last, on 25th June 1857 General Wheeler planted the white flag of truce over his fort. Fighting was stopped at once. Eventually, all Britishers inside the fort surrendered themselves before Nana Saheb. The fort, Artillery, all weapons and treasury were entrusted to Nana Saheb. It was promised on behalf of Nana that all Britishers would be sent by boats to Allahabad. But, in the meantime, revolutionaries of other places, who were seething with anger by atrocities of Neil, came to Kanpur. They slaughtered all British men, women and children who were sitting on boats at Sattichaura Ghat (Wharf) of Ganga to go to Allahabad. Historians have criticised this carnage harshly but have also not refuted the truth that all this had happened

as reaction of Gen. Neil's terrible atrocities.

Historians differ on the point whether Tatya Tope had a hand in this carnage. As Tatya Tope had said later in a statement, his responsibility was to arrange the boats and getting British families board them and proceed towards Allahabad. But, when boats moved, enraged revolutionaries jumped into the river and carried out the massacre. It was difficult for Tatya to ward off this unexpected and sudden attack. British historians have accused Tatya that when the boats were ready to leave, Tatya gestured and violent revolutionaries attacked the unarmed Britishers. But this accusation is wrong. Tatya had gestured for the boats to depart and not for revolutionaries to attack. The truth is that so long as those Britishers were under Tatya's control, nobody had dared to do anything like that. Whatever happened was after the point when boats were no longer under the control of Tatya. Perhaps, revolutionaries had waited just for that moment. In any case, it is not proper to blame Tatya Tope for the Sattichaura Ghat carnage—because it was, in any case, a revenge of Neil's atrocities which even British historians have accepted.

After winning Kanpur Nana Saheb thought that he had become a king again. So, he convened a big court in Kanpur on 28th June 1857. Tatya Tope was not in favour of giving attention to things like convening the court etc. at that time. He wanted to augment military power. One reason for this was also the fact that all attempts were being made by Britishers to subdue the revolt. Tatya had felt that Britishers would throw their full might to suppress revolution which had begun before time. Therefore, if a decisive war was to be waged, it was necessary not only to increase our military strength but to organise it too. In fact, one weak aspect of

1857 revolution was that the strength of kings and revolutionary people was scattered. The aim of starting revolution on the same date and time all over the country was precisely this that full strength of the country would rise in unison. If that could not happen, it was necessary now to pay special attention to organising military power and to take all necessary measures for it. This thinking of Tatya Tope was absolutely right but be was, after all, a subordinate of Nana Saheb. Hence, on many occasions he could not say anything, even if he wanted to do so and could not implement further plans. It is clear that whatever decision Nana Saheb took, Tatya Tope had to keep quiet, even if he did not like it. Something like this also happened about holding the royal court in Kanpur. Court was, however, convened. Six regiments of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, many landlords and innumerable people participated in it. It has been written—"First of all, salutation of 101 guns was given in the name of emperor Bahadurshah. Thereafter, a 21-gun salutation was given to Nana Saheb. Nana Saheb thanked soldiers and people. One lakh rupees were distributed in the Army as prize. After holding the court Nana Saheb went to Bithur. In Bithur Nana Saheb duly occupied the Peshwa's throne in July 1857." (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj : Sunderlal, P./856*).

At this occasion it was announced that Tatya Tope had been made military advisor. Forgetting everything Tatya Tope started making all possible efforts in the direction of increasing military power.

By now, flames of revolution had spread to the entire country and Britishers were doing their utmost to suppress it. Loard Canning had set off General Neil with a vast army to Varanasi. Historians write about General Neil's atrocities with

some amount of bashfulness—"It would be better not to write about General Neil's revenge." (*Charles Ball : 'Indian Mutiny' : Vol. I, P./243-44*).

It is written on a dreadful page of history : "General Neil's soldiers would enter a village. They would kill anyone who came on their way without discrimination. Scaffolds were installed at various places on which people were hanged continuously round the clock. Guns were set outside villages that were set on fire—all men, women, children and animals being trapped inside. Many British officers have proudly described these heart rending scenes." (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj : Sunderlal, P./844*). The following comment of historian Sir John K. presents the picture of General Neil's gruesome and cruel revenge. "Both varieties of British officers, Military and civil, were setting up their own bloody courts. Without any pretence of a trial and without discriminating between men, women or children, they were killing Indians. Thereafter, their thirst of blood further intensified. With reference to the letters which were sent by the Governor-General of India to Englad, it has been recorded in the documents of British Parliament that, "old women and children have been slaughtered in the same way as those who were guilty of revolt." (*History of the Sepoy War, Vol. 2 : Sir John K.*). Similarly, this statement of Sir George Campbell describes the story of General Neil's atrocities : "And I know that massacre was carried out in Allahabad without any discrimination. And thereafter, Neil committed certain acts that seemed more dreadful than a massacre. He deliberately killed people after such brutal tortures that, as far as our evidences tell us, Indians never perpetrated on anyone." (*Sir George Campbell : Provisional Civil Commissioner in the Mutiny, as quoted in 'the other side of the Medal' : Edward Thompson*).

General Neil was still in Allahabad when news about Kanpur reached him. Leaving behind a small army unit, necessary to keep Allahabad under control, General Neil set off the remaining force under Major Renaurd, for Kanpur. According to orders given to it, this army was proceeding, setting villages on way on fire and tyrannizing villagers. Further on the way, Maj. Havlock also joined Maj. Renaurd with his army.

Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope got the news in Bithur that the British army under Maj. Renaurd has set out for Kanpur. Tatya Tope had hardly organised his army when this news came. At that time, Tatya had twenty thousand soldiers. Most of them were peasants, landowners and labourers. They were not as proficient in the art of war as soldiers of the British army. Even so, Tatya Tope positioned them with great vision. He posted army units at many places for the safety of Kanpur. Formed a net of spies. After getting the news that Maj. Renaurd was coming via Fatehpur, Tatya Tope at once sent an army under the leadership of Jwala Prasad towards Fatehpur. Jwala Prasad drew the battle line with his army on the way on which Maj. Renaurd was advancing. Historians write that had Maj. Renaurd taken that route for going to Kanpur, not a single soldier of him would have survived. But due to sudden arrival of Maj. Havlock's force, Maj. Renaurd changed his route. It is said that what Tatya's spies could not do, spies of Maj. Renaurd did by giving the news of the front of Jwala Prasad's forces. In fact, Jwala Prasad had no clue about the increased strength of Renaurd's army due to joining of Havlock's forces. Anyway, when Jwala Prasad came to know that Renaurd was coming by another route, he went there with his army. When Jwala Prasad attacked the British forces, they retaliated with a fiercer attack. Seeing the vast British army Jwala Prasad

lost his wits. In comparison to the revolutionary army, British army had better guns and rifles. Because of this, revolutionaries lost their moorings. Then, Jwala Prasad ordered his mounted force to move forward. Cavaliers of British army came forward too. Fierce fighting took place between the two forces. But it became difficult for the revolutionary army to hold out before the superior strength of British army. Britishers won the battle. Jwala Prasad had to withdraw with his remaining force. Fatehpur was occupied by Britishers.

Now, Jwala Prasad collected his forces again. Nana Saheb sent a force under his brother Bala Saheb, for his help. This time, revolutionary army had taken position at a bridge on Pandav river near a village named Ong. British forces had no way other than that bridge to go to Kanpur. Jwala Prasad had installed his guns right in front of that bridge. These guns were kept hidden in the dense forest facing the bridge. Soldiers hid there too. River was flooded at that time. Hence, it was impossible for the forces of Havlock—Renaurd to cross the river from any other place. There were no boats either at that place. The plan of the revolutionary army was to blast the bridge. But they considered it proper to engage the Britishers in a fight before that. It was here that they made the mistake. Had the bridge been blasted, Havlock could never have advanced. On arrival of British forces guns were fired from both sides. Major Renaurd was killed in this bombarding. Even so, revolutionary forces could not hold out before the British army. In the event, it could not also blast the bridge and Havlock went ahead with his full force. Revolutionary army had to withdraw.

Revolutionary forces were in low spirits due to their repeated defeats and Havlock was advancing speedily and with all his might. He received the news that Nana has imprisoned English women and children in Kanpur. He should reach Kanpur as early as possible to free them.

Tatya decided to check the advancing Havlock and his army at any cost. Havlock was coming by Grand Trunk Road. That road was completely blockaded. Tatya threw all his military strength there. There was no lapse in this plan of Tatya. But his soldiers were not well trained. A military force does not mean gathering of a crowd. Whereas British soldiers were well trained and they had modern guns and rifles. Tatya had very little time at his disposal to train his soldiers and provide them with modern weapons. Hence, he had to make do with the available force—whatever state it was in.

The way Tatya had laid the trap, it was difficult for Havlock's forces to escape safely. This trap was laid one mile away at the back of crossing of G.T. Road and the road coming from cantonment. Tatya Tope and Tika Singh had taken their respective positions. Trenches were made in both roads. Entire trap was structured in a semi-circle, on both ends of which guns were installed. Cavalry force was standing back. Revolutionary forces had guessed that enemy troops will take this straight road and they will be tackled easily. Quoting Havlock's views on this trap, which was a marvel of Tatya Tope's mind, British historian Sir John K. profusely praises it—"That trap of the national army was laid so brilliantly that British commander Havlock who had studied the science of war all his life, had to use all his intelligence to understand it."

This trap was laid on the Grand Trunk Road near the village Ahirwan. Some description of the struggle that Havlock had to undergo to tackle that trap follows—"It was difficult for bullocks to pull guns on ploughed farms in that rainy season. Still, Britishers advanced skilfully. Spies of Havlock had informed him about Tatya Tope's trap. Hence, he was advancing very carefully. At this moment, Tatya's guns started

bombarding. British forces were in a fix. Havlock told his men that this was the opportunity to win the battle. What you have to do is, without caring for life, just to occupy revolutionaries' guns and shut their mouths. And though many soldiers of the British army lost their lives, they quietened revolutionaries' guns. On the other side, hiding below mango groves, Havlock, with a small force reached on the backside of Tatya's force and encircled it. Revolutionary force was flustered by this sudden attack. Fighting began. There was fierce fighting. But British forces outnumbered them and their pressure kept increasing. Under compulsion, revolutionaries had to withdraw. Havlock succeeded in advancing towards Kanpur." (*Sir John K. and Malleson : The History of Indian Mutiny, Vol. 5 P./240*).

By now, the news of atrocities perpetrated by Britishers in Fatehpur had reached Kanpur. Infact, Fatehpur city had declared its independence. Some British officers had also been killed there. But, revolutionaries had spared Fatehpur's Magistrate, Sheror. Sheror joined Havlock's army. Then Havlock and Sheror attacked Fatehpur city and took full revenge. First of all, soldiers of the Company were permitted to plunder the city. It is written that thereafter the entire city of Fatehpur, with all its residents inside, was consigned to flames of fire. When the news of this gruesome atrocity reached Kanpur, revolutionary soldiers decided to take revenge. Nana Saheb took the command himself to face Havlock's forces. But, on the very next day, 125 British men, women and children, imprisoned in 'Bibigarh', a house in Kanpur, became victims of revolutionaries' ire. Then, on next day, their dead bodies were thrown into a well. Calling this incident 'carnage of Bibigarh', British historians have criticised it harshly. Some have presented it after making it spicy. During British rule,

lessons about many inhuman acts of Indians, including this incident, was taught. But the whole situation became clear by the following statement of British historian Sir John K., which has been quoted on P./884 of Sunderlal's book. *'Bharat mein Angrezi Raj'*.—"It has been stated in histories of that period that along with this horrible carnage, many other excessive brutalities and indescribable shameful acts were perpetrated. In reality, however, things regarding these brutalities and shameful acts were imagined by people in a frenzied state of mind. Others believed those things without verification and started spreading them in a mindless manner. Everything about the carnages of June and July was thoroughly examined by members of government commission and they have opined in clear terms that no mayhem was perpetrated nor anyone was dishonoured." (*K. and Malleson : 'History of the Indian Mutiny' : P./281*)

General Havlock reached Kanpur with his forces on 10th July 1857. Nana Saheb himself encountered Havlock. Both sides attacked fiercely. Bombarding went on for quite some time but Nana Saheb's forces had to withdraw. Tatya collected some force and attacked Havlock once again. But Indian revolutionary forces suffered heavy losses. Eventually, Nana Saheb and Tatya had to leave Kanpur and settle at Bithur.

As soon as British army entered Kanpur, the city was thrown into unprecedented chaos. Historians write that first of all, white and Sikh soldiers were ordered to plunder the city. It is said that there was a big spot of blood on the soil of Bibigarh. It was suspected that the blood spot belonged to white ladies and children. Many Brahmins of the city who were suspected to take part in revolt, were called and ordered to lick that blood and then clean the place with a broom.

Thereafter, they were hanged. One Britisher has described his evil intentions behind this act in these words : "I know that by touching the blood of a foreigner and then to clean it with the broom of a sweeper, a high caste Hindu falls from his religion. Not only this, because I know it, I made them do such things. Until we do not crush their religious beliefs under our feet, before hanging them, our revenge will not be complete, so that they cannot have the satisfaction that they kept up their religious sanctity till they died."

Strategy of Killing and Counter-killing

Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope etc., all came to Bithur. All of them were dejected and perturbed by one after the other continuous defeats of the revolutionary army. All of them had just one question in their mind that if it continues like this, the revolution would fail. But there was another question too—what were the reasons of defeats and why ?

All sat quietly in the court of Nana Saheb to find answers to all these questions. After thinking for a while Nana Saheb said—"There are two reasons for our defeat. One is, as compared to British army, our men are not as well trained. Second is, all of us were playing the role of army commander. At one place Tatya was giving commands, at some other Jwala Prasad did the same and at yet another place, I commanded our men myself. There was neither a strategy nor carefully thought out military tactics. We just went and grappled with the enemy. Granted that there is plenty of elan and bravery in our forces but unless a battle is taken in a certain direction, all the strength is wasted. And that is precisely what has happened. I have thought now that command of the army will be vested in one individual. And I hope that all of you would agree with my decision that Tatya Tope is appointed as the commander of our Army." Thereafter, Nana Saheb got up and presented a sword to Tatya Tope.

It was decided after deliberating on future strategy that it was no longer safe to remain in Bithur. Therefore all revolutionary leaders Nana Saheb, his brothers, Tatya Tope etc.—left Bithur, with their families, in the night of 18th July 1857. Crossing the river Ganga, they took refuge in Chaudhary Bhopal Singh's house at Fatehpur Chaurasi.

Major Stevenson came with his forces to Bithur and captured it. Havlock had completed his job in Kanpur. As soon as Gen. Neil arrived, Havlock proceeded to Lucknow because it was required to establish British rule there after freeing the Britishers trapped there.

Kanpur was caught now under Gen. Neil's dictates. Quoting Mead and Sheror, British historians describe Neil's atrocities in Kanpur in these words : "Disaster had befallen once again on Kanpur. He had brought the entire city under clutches of his bloody paws. He believed in the dictum that cruelties done in the beginning are called mercy in the end. Hence, in order to take revenge of the Bibigarh carnage he started another horrible, savage and vengeful massacre. He wanted to make residents of Hindustan aware that punishment of such acts will be harshest so that their feelings of resistance were crushed completely and they will remember it forever." (*Mead and Sheror : Memories of the Mutiny, Vol. 1, P./251-52*).

Britishers' victory in Kanpur affected a great deal revolution in Awadh region. Historians are of the view that, "The defeat at Kanpur changed the track of national resistance. Rebels had lost contact with the second important centre of Awadh's revolt, Lucknow. That destroyed the central source of authority and strength and British forces got a strategic region."

Havlock had set out from Kanpur for Lucknow but in crossing a distance of less than forty five miles, he suffered quite a setback. He had thought that he would reach Lucknow easily with his one and a half thousand troops and thirteen guns. But after crossing the Ganga he came to know that every inch of Awadh's soil was ablaze with the flames of revolution. Historians write—"Most of the landlords had decided to stop Havlock with help of the force that they had formed by integrating hundreds of soldiers employed by each of them. On his way he saw the green flag of independence fluttering over each village. Havlock was made to fight first in Unnao. After that as and when he tried to proceed he had to fight several groups. The second battle after Unnao took place in Bashiratganj. Both these battles took place on 29th July 1857 in which Havlock lost one sixth of his force. Next day. i.e. on 30th July Havlock drew back and he took refuge with his forces in Magarwada. On the other hand, when Nana Saheb came to know that Havlock was proceeding towards Lucknow, he thought of attacking Kanpur once again." (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj : Sunderlal, P./909*). His intention was fortified by the forces that had come from cities of Sagar, Gwalior etc. for his help. Now, Nana Saheb had a large force and he entrusted its command to Tatya Tope.

Tatya Tope set out independently with this force towards Kanpur. He first captured Shivrajpur and Sanchedi. Here, officers in-charge of police stations, who were appointed by Britishers were killed and new police officers, who were loyal to revolutionaries, were appointed. Thereafter, Tatya Tope proceeded towards Bithur. When Gen. Neil got this news in Kanpur, he became nervous because he did not have enough forces to take on Tatya Tope. So , he called Havlock back immediately. On 12th August 1857 Havlock came back to

Kanpur. On 13th August Havlock's forces under the leadership of Gen. Neil set out to take on Tatya's forces. On 17th August both forces clashed near Kanpur. After fierce fighting both armies retracted. Then Tatya proceeded with his force towards Bithur. Havlock's forces attacked Tatya once again. Fierce fighting took place in Bithur. Although Tatya's forces withdrew after defeat but historians have praised very much Tatya's valour and his commandership. "Once again Indian soldiers' valour made an impression upon a superior army and they made a name for themselves in this war and Tatya's reputation as an army commander was established. Havlock wrote in one of his letters—I should do justice to rebels by saying that they toiled hard to fight. Otherwise, despite being in a good position, they would not have survived an hour before bombarding from my side." (*Tatya Tope : Indumati Shewde : N.B.T. P./42*).

Although Tatya Tope was a subordinate of Nana Saheb, his independent personality was gradually becoming evident to people. He thought that there is no advantage in clashing with Britishers with a small force and decreasing our own strength. Now was the need to raise a vast army. Besides, he also felt that the Headquarter of our army and our activity should be located in a fort. From this viewpoint he found the fort of Kalpi stronger and appropriate.

One day Tatya Tope quietly set out from Fatehpur Chourasi on a secret mission. This was to bring Indian soldiers of the British army stationed at Gwalior to their side. At that time, there were more than eight thousand indigenous soldiers in Gwalior. Their cost was borne by the king of Gwalior. But their command was in the hands of Britishers. So, it was hoped that those indigenous soldiers would come on the side of Tatya Tope's revolutionary army. This force was stationed at Morar cantonment of Gwalior.

This force was comprised of regiments of infantry, cavalry and Artillery. Tatya came and held secret talks with soldiers and made them willing to accompany him on his return journey to Kalpi. Tatya Tope reached straight to Kalpi with that vast army. On 9th November 1857 Tatya took possession of Kalpi's fort. Now Tatya's military base was in the fort of Kalpi. Finding Kalpi as an appropriate place to become a centre of revolution, Nana Saheb also reached Kalpi. He entrusted the responsibility of making rest of the arrangements there, to Bala Saheb. Thereafter, Tatya Tope made preparations to attack Kanpur once again.

Before dilating on the next programme of Tatya Tope, we take a bird's eye view of the plight of revolutionary activities taking place in the rest of India. Although revolutionaries had captured Delhi, there were some lapses due to which their intentions were not succeeding. "Whereas on one side British army could not dare to enter the city, revolutionary forces too, on the other side, could not dare to take on British army for once and eliminate them. The only reason was while there was no lack of bravery, number or war material in Delhi's army, there wasn't a single able and influential leader in Delhi who could keep forces belonging to various provines in discipline and could inspire them to prepare for a decisive war with Britishers after integrating them. Emperor Bahadurshah was very old and was incapable to command the forces himself. Prince Mirza Mughal had been proved to be incapable. Commander Bakhta Khan was the most capable and intelligent among revolutionary commanders of that time. But he was an ordinary commander. He wasn't born in a royal family. Pride of noble origins was still prevalent among Indians. Commanders of many forces in Delhi belonged to small or big royal families. They took Bakhta Khan lightly.

Some of them were even jealous of Bakhta Khan. Day by day, mutual conflicts were increasing. Emperor Bahadurshah tried to reason with them but did not succeed." (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj : Sunderlal : P./892*)

Eventually, Britishers got the benefit of weaknesses of Delhi's revolutionaries. As soon as they got help from Punjab's forces, they attacked Delhi. And on 14th September 1857 Delhi once again came into the possession of Britishers. About four thousand people were killed in trying to save Delhi. Emperor Bahadurshah was arrested. His princes were killed. Historians write—"When our (Britishers') forces entered the city, all people who had remained within the walled city were killed by bayonets. You will have an idea of the number of persons killed if I tell you that some forty or fifty people were hiding in a single house. They were not rebels but were city dwellers, who had trust in our kindness and forgiveness. I am happy that their delusion about us was broken." (*Montgomery Martin : from a letter written to 'Bombay Telegraph'*)

Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was deposed. He was arrested and sent to Calcutta. After that Lucknow came under British rule. But when the wave of revolution rose in the whole country, soldiers and servants of a majority of landlords of Awadh had assembled under the flag of Begum Hazrat Mahal in Lucknow. The Begum of Wajid Ali Shah, Hazrat Mahal had kept up the flag of revolution. Rebel armies had driven out British forces from Lucknow. Begum Hazrat Mahal' rule was now established in Lucknow in the name of Wajid Ali Shah's prince Birjis Qadra. In this connection historian G.B. Malleson has written : "The entire Awadh had taken to arms against us. Not only the regular army but eight thousand men of the deposed Nawab, Landlords and their soldiers, two and a half hundred forts—some of which were equipped with

guns—all had risen against us. These people had compared Company's rule with the rules of their Nawabs. And they had nearly unanimously decided that the rule of their Nawabs was better than Company's rule. Even Soldiers who had earlier worked in our army and were now getting pension had adjudged against our rule and each of them was involved in the revolt."

On this side, Tatya had made all arrangements in Kalpi to attack Kanpur. Situated on the south bank of Yamuna, Kalpi is a small town. Kalpi is 120 miles away from Jhansi and 46 miles from Kanpur. On the western end of Yamuna there is a strong old fort. Earlier, under the rule of Peshwas, this town was under Govind-Pant Bundele. But by virtue of a pact with Britishers in 1806, Kalpi was under Britishers' rule. When revolt broke out in Jhansi and Kanpur, the force stationed at Kalpi also revolted on 12th June 1857. Munshi Shivprasad, the deputy collector of Kalpi appointed by Britishers, had run away from Kalpi. With help coming from revolutionary forces, Tatya Tope had no difficulty in making Kalpi his centre of activities.

With the entire country coming under the spell of revolution Britishers had called Sir Collin Campbell to hold command of the British army. Running into the seventh decade of his age, Campbell had military experience of about fifty years. He was counted among brilliant Generals. All this time he was leading the British army in Cremean war. But he received orders to reach India immediately and to assist in operations to crush revolutionary forces there. Sir Collin Campbell reached Calcutta on 13th August. He was appointed the new commander-in-chief in India. Campbell called new regiments from Madras, Bombay, Sri Lanka and China. New guns were cast in the factory at Kasimbazar. It took Campbell

two months for these preparations. After that he proceeded to Lucknow where revolutionaries had imprisoned Generals like Havlock and Outram and other British families and Begum Hazrat Mahal was holding the reigns of power.

With the intention of attacking Lucknow Campbell reached Alambagh on 9th November. Before this he had sent General Grant with a vast new army, which was camping in Alambagh. Campbell had come to know that Tatya Tope was to come to Kanpur with his forces. So he thought it proper to leave some force and a few guns in Kanpur under Gen. Windham. In fact after departing from Calcutta, Campbell had come first to Kanpur and assessing the situation there he made future strategy. And in accordance with the strategy he reached Lucknow with full preparations. On 14th November Campbell's army started advancing towards Residency. The forces of Havlock and Outram exerted pressure on Revolutionary forces from inside. Fierce fighting took place on 16th November. After nine days of fighting, forces of Campbell and Havlock joined together on 23rd November. On 24th November Havlock died. After this, Campbell also got the news that defeating the British forces, Tatya Tope had recaptured Kanpur. Hence, after entrusting the Lucknow front to Outram, Campbell marched towards Kanpur.

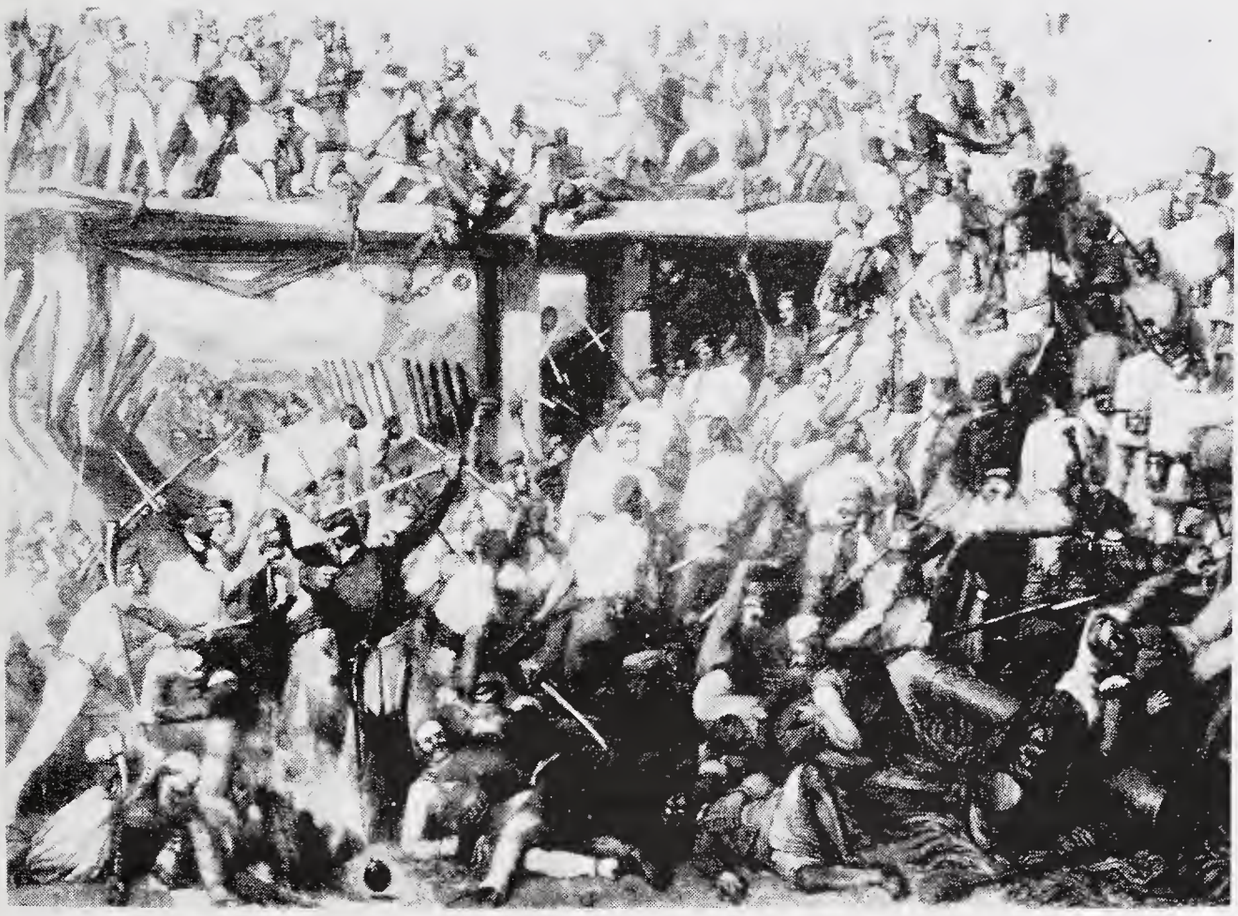
Tatya Tope reached Kanpur with his vast army and surrounding Windham made it impossible for him to get supplies from outside. Then Gen. Windham set out from Kanpur with his forces to take on Tatya. A fierce battle between the two forces took place on 26th November near the Pandu river. But Tatya suffered heavy losses on first day's battle. Then Tatya devised a strategy to attack Windham from three sides. *Historian Malleson writes on P./167 of his book 'Indian Mutiny', Vol. 4* : "The General of rebel army was not a fool.

Instead of getting scared by losses caused by Windham, he understood weaknesses of the British General clearly. Tatya read Windham's situation at that time and his weaknesses so well as someone reads an open book. Natural qualities of a true General were present in Tatya. He decided to take advantage of these weaknesses of Windham."

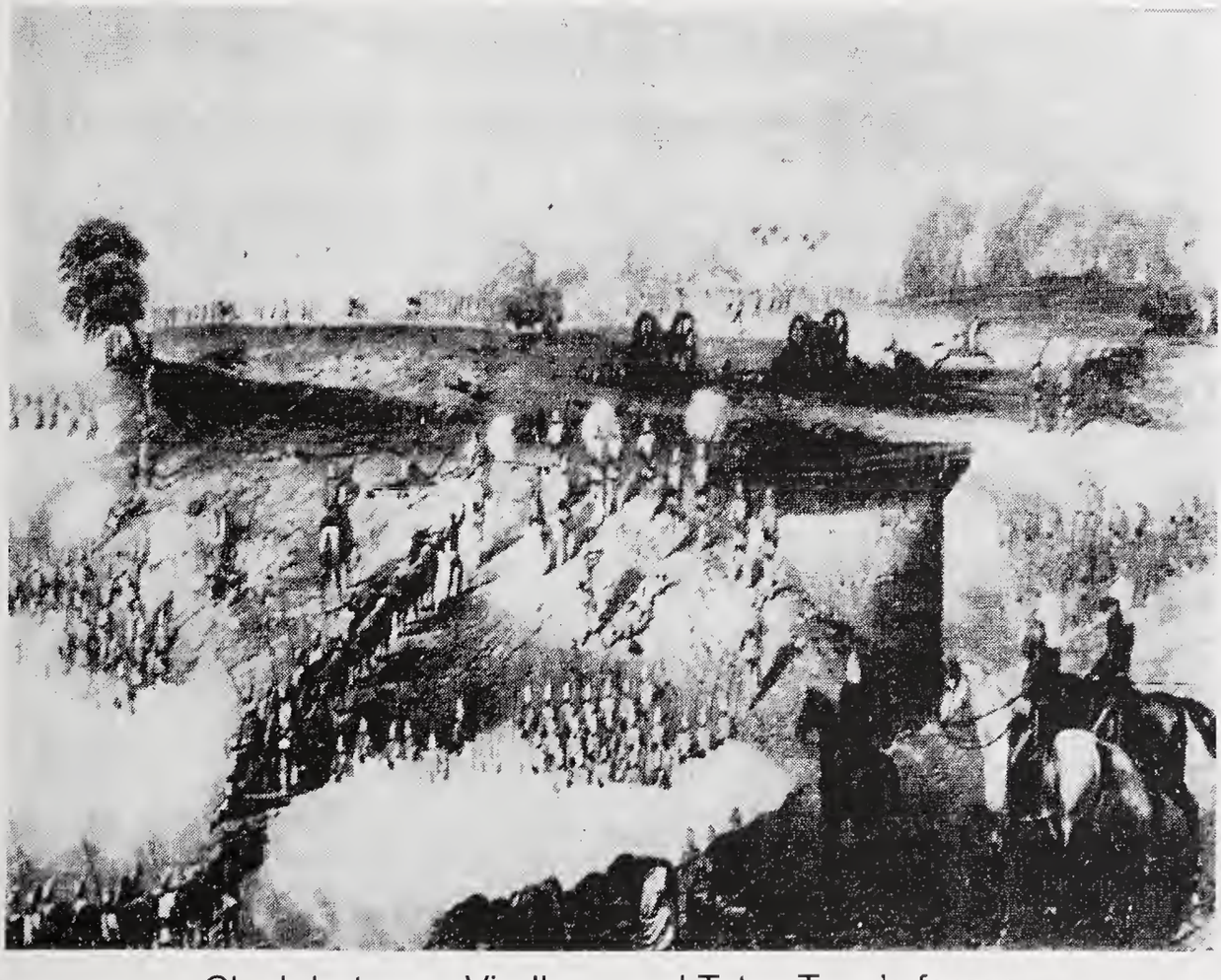
Tatya's new strategy was worked upon in the night itself. On the other hand, Windham was under the impression that Tatya's strength had diminished. But, in the morning, the war was completely transformed. Tatya's forces increased pressure on Windham's army from three sides. It kept withdrawing. To the extent that an advancing Tatya's army reached up to the centre of Kanpur. Windham's army tried for three days to halt the advancing army of Tatya but eventually he had to run away from the battle field. Many British officers were killed in this battle. Once again Kanpur came under possession of Tatya Tope. He also intimated Nana Saheb to come immediately to Kanpur with his force. The reason was that Tatya had received secret information that Campbell has set out from Lucknow for Kanpur. Hence, it was necessary to increase military strength. To stop Campbell from coming to Kanpur Tatya Tope ordered his soldiers to demolish the Bridge over Ganga and install guns on the bank of Ganga. Tatya Tope was a farsighted General. He had also understood that Campbell might take a route other than via the said bridge. That is why Tatya's spies were active over a long stretch on the bank of Ganga so that they could inform him about Campbell's arrival. And Campbell precisely did that. As soon as his forces crossed Ganga from a different point, Tatya Tope surrounded it. Praising Tatya Tope, historian Malleson writes, "Tatya Tope's 'natural ability' was very advanced." (*Malleson : Indian Mutiny, Vol. 4, P./186*).

Tatya's forces encircled Campbell's army at Ganga bank itself. Fierce fighting continued from 1st December to 6th December. The number of troops on both sides was roughly equal. The Gwalior army was, in a way, Tatya's right hand. With the combined attack of British and Indian soldiers on this contingent, it was uprooted. The result was victory for Campbell and Kanpur once again came under Company's possession. Tatya went southwards with his remaining force and guns. British forces pursued him. Another battle took place in Shivrajpur. In this battle some of Tatya's guns also came in Britishers' hands. Thereafter, Tatya managed to go again towards Kalpi with his remaining force. Campbell's army, while returning razed the palaces of Bithur to ground. (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj : Sunderlal. P./917*).

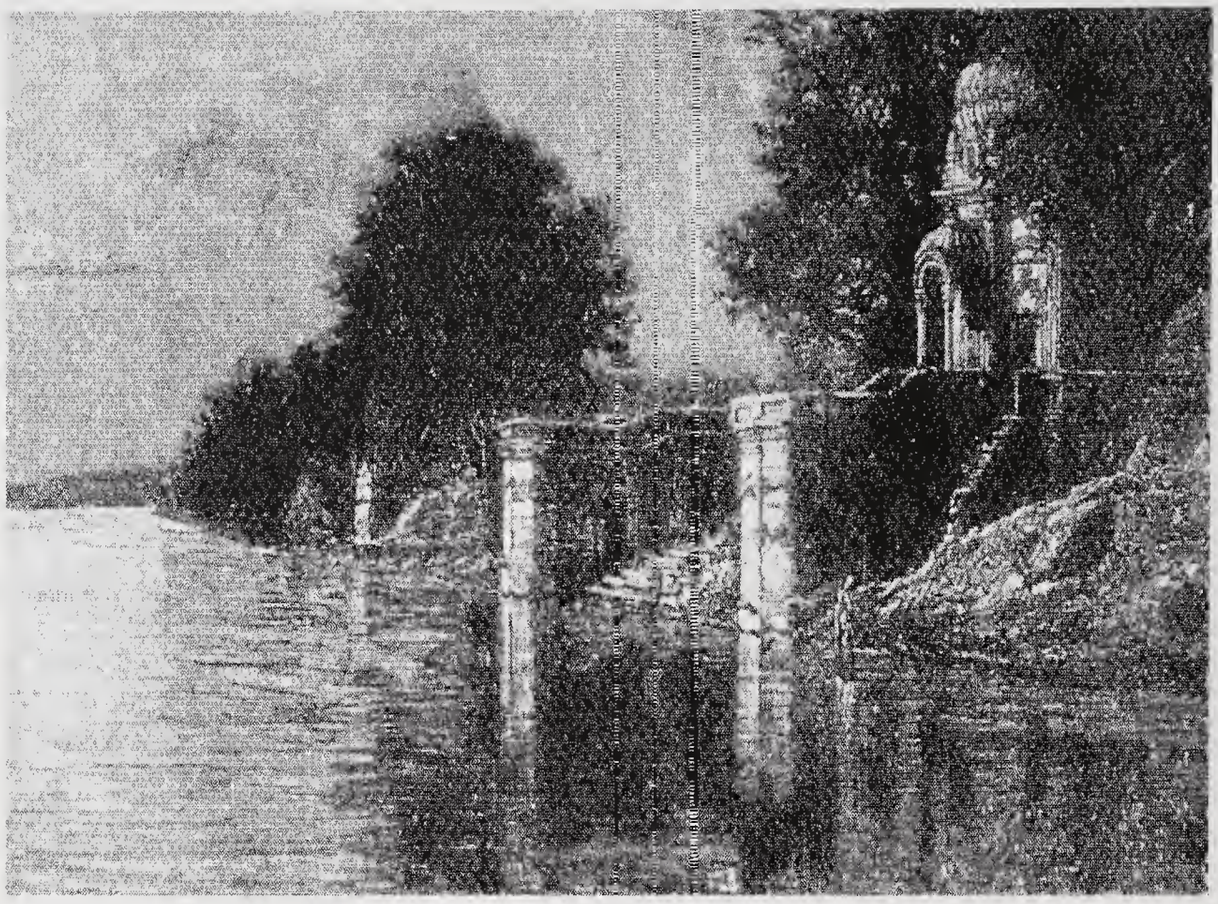
Now Lucknow was the biggest challenge before Campbell. At that time Lucknow was the biggest centre of revolution. On 23rd February 1858 Campbell set out from Kanpur for Lucknow with 17,000 foot soldiers, 5,000 mounted men and 134 guns. British historians have written that never before such a vast force was seen in any battlefield of Awadh. A Britisher named Rusell has written in his diary that this army destroyed many villages with gunpowder on its way to Lucknow. Till the time Campbell reached Lucknow the entire city of Lucknow was in hands of revolutionaries. There was British army in Alambagh outside the city and thirty thousand Indian soldiers and fifty thousand armed volunteers were prepared to fight for revolutionaries within the city. First of all, Outram attacked on 6th March 1858. Then Collin Campbell's army joined them and intensified the attack. Fierce fighting went on from 6th March to 15th March. Rivers of blood flowed in streets of Lucknow for the third time. At last Lucknow was captured by Britishers. A British officer.



Dilli under attack

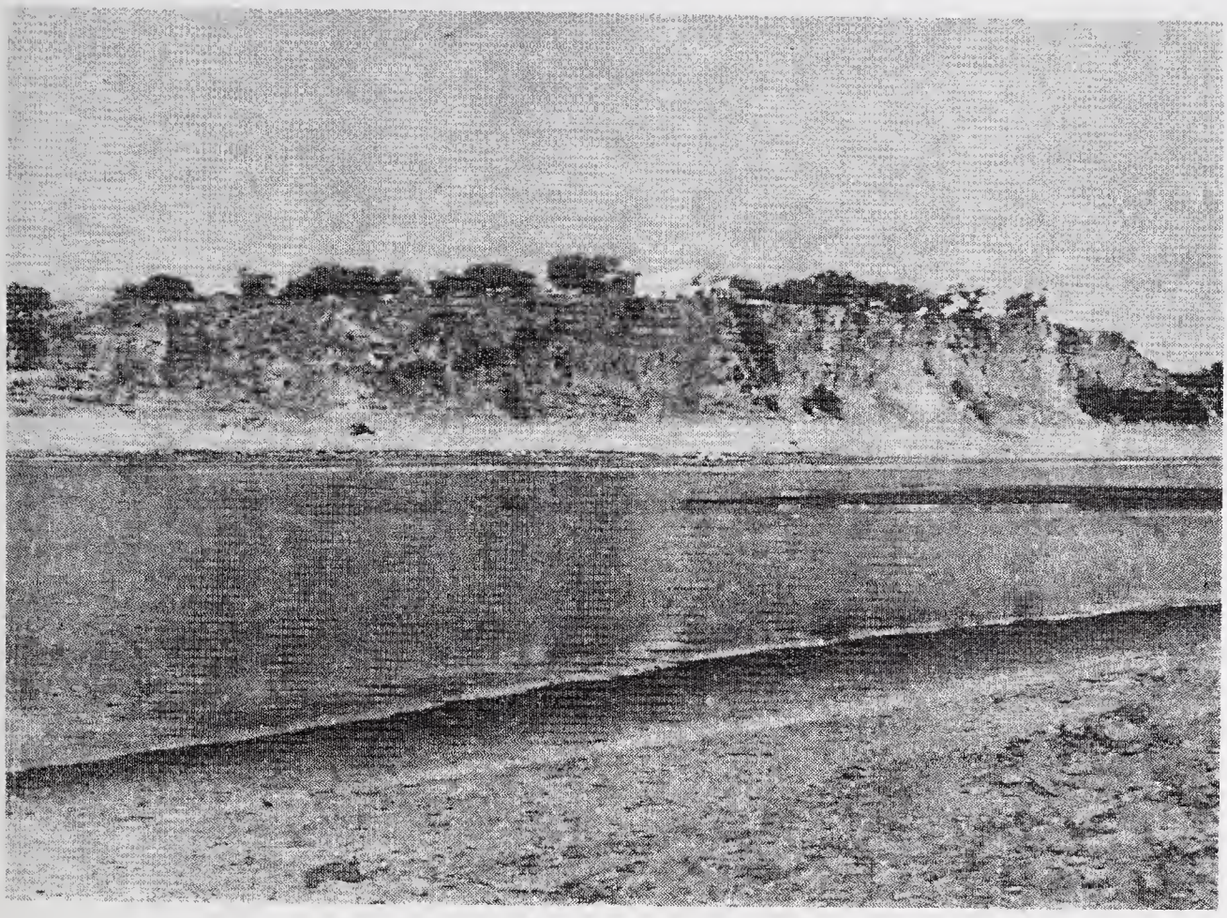


Clash between Vindham and Tatya Tope's forces



Satichaura Ghat, Kanpur

General Havloc attacks Fatehpur



Kalpi Fort

Tatya's army

Armies of Sir Collin Campbel and Tatya Tope

Arson in Kanpur

Lieutenant Magendy has written that, "The way the Company's army treated residents of Lucknow, the way open plunder and massacre were allowed, cannot be described in words. Suffice it to say that in the massacre in Lucknow at that time, no discrimination of any kind was made. Begum Hazrat Mahal, Nawab Birjis Qadra and revolutionary leader Maulvi Ahmedshah all three had left the city.

It is extremely important to mention Maulvi Ahmedshah among revolutionaries of Awadh. Situated in the eastern part of Awadh, Faizabad city has its own importance. Referring to Sir Henry Lawrence historians John K. and Malleson have written that Britishers had done grave injustice to the Talukedars of Faizabad district. Jagirs of some had been confiscated and half of villages of some were snatched. Maulvi Ahmedshah was one of such deposed Talukedars. From the time political power of Awadh was snatched away, Maulvi Ahmedshah had devoted all his time to this great war of freedom. He was busy preparing for fighting Britishers in every way. He was continuously touring the places from Faizabad to Lucknow and upto Agra. He delivered many lectures and wrote in many magazines on revolution. Thus he had left nothing in inciting passion for revolution. When Britishers came to know of his activities, they issued orders for his arrest. But in such high esteem was he held in Awadh region that the local police could not even think, what to say of arresting him, even to touch him. So Britishers sent troops and got him arrested. A case of rebellion was registered against him. He was sentenced to death and was imprisoned in Faizabad jail till the date of hanging. Imprisonment of Maulvi Ahmedshah inflamed the passion of people of Faizabad. At that time there were two regiments of infantry, some cavaliers and guns in the city of Faizabad. Soldiers and people of Faizabad

immediately got together and raised the flag of independence. On parade ground indigenous soldiers told their British officers flatly that for the time being they will obey the orders of their Indian officers only. Subedar Dalip Singh came forward immediately and imprisoned all British officers. Prison walls were broken. Fetters of Maulvi Ahmedshah were cut. All soldiers and people of Faizabad chose Maulvi Ahmedshah their leader. Maulvi Ahmedshah wrote to all Britishers in Faizabad asking them to leave Faizabad at once. He got all Britishers seated on boats and sent them off. They were given food items and money for expenses during journey. Peace was established in Faizabad city. On 9th June it was announced in the city and nearby areas that Company's rule had been ended and the rule of Wajid Ali Shah was established again.

But Britishers did not want to lose Awadh at any cost. Indian leaders of revolution—Nana Saheb; Tatya Tope, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Maulvi Ahmedshah—had not become free from anxiety from Britishers and were keenly watching their every strategy. The main task before these leaders was to increase their military strength as much as possible and to get the forces trained. But Indian Revolutionary Army lacked discipline that was visible in British forces. Indian revolutionary soldiers had come from different places and they obeyed orders of their group leaders only. This resulted in arbitrary decisions taken by group leaders where need of the hour demanded a concerted and planned action—that messed up the roles played by various groups that were positioned by the General with some definite purpose in mind. And Britishers usually won.

Maulvi Ahmedshah and Begum Hazrat Mahal were successful, to an extent, in organising forces. Maulvi Ahmedshah had made Bari, a place thirty miles away from Lucknow, the Base of his activities. His force was hiding in a

village, four miles away. Some distance away from this village mounted force was hiding in another village. Begum Hazrat Mahal was in Bitawli with six thousand troops. The British commander Hope Grant moved from Lucknow towards Bari with three thousand troops and Artillery. Ahmedshah's strategy was that when Company's forces attack this village infantrymen of Ahmedshah would encounter them and his mounted force would come suddenly and encircle them. Maulvi Ahmedshah himself was with the infantry. His mounted force had instructions to attack only after fighting began between Maulvi's infantry men and British forces. They were asked to keep in hiding till the fighting began. Despite all this explaining, mounted force attacked Britishers directly. The coming out of mounted force and their direct encounter with Britishers against the instructions of Ahmedshah proved futile. Only after a little fighting, the mounted men of Ahmedshah fled from the battlefield.

Maulvi Ahmedshah now made a new strategy. He went to Shahjahanpur with Nana Saheb. Collin Campbell came to know about it. He wanted to arrest Nana Saheb and Maulvi Ahmedshah. He came and surrounded Shahjahanpur but Nana and the Maulvi left the place without difficulty. And then they attacked British forces from behind. Shahjahanpur was occupied by the Maulvi. But Campbell too was not a General to accept defeat easily. He attacked Shahjahanpur with full military strength. Fierce fighting continued for three days with Maulvi Ahmedshah's forces. For a moment it seemed that Ahmedshah would not be able to come out of Shahjahanpur safely. Just then revolutionary leaders came from all sides with their forces to help the Maulvi. Begum Hazrat Mahal, Nana Saheb, Prince Firozshah—all had reached Shahjahanpur. With their help Maulvi Ahmedshah came out of Shahjahanpur.

Britishers wanted to get hold of Maulvi Ahmedshah at any cost but he always managed to elude them. Maulvi Ahmedshah once again entered Awadh under cover. He wanted to organise his forces again. In this pursuit he sent a letter under the seal of Begum Hazrat Mahal to Jagannath Singh, the king of a small princely state 'Pauna' soliciting his help in that moment of crisis. In reply King Jagannath Singh sent a word to him to come and talk in person. Riding his elephant, Ahmedshah reached Pauna state. King Jagannath Singh and his brother received him warmly. Then all three went inside to hold talks. During the talks, when Ahmedshah was free of suspicion of any danger or treachery, Jagannath Singh's brother suddenly fired at Ahmedshah from close range. Ahmedshah did not get even a chance to get out safely. King Jagannath Singh immediately drew his sword out and beheaded Ahmedshah and then wrapping his head in a cloth, delivered it personally to the Britishers' camp in Shahjahanpur. Next day, Ahmedshah's head was suspended in front of the Police station of Shahjahanpur. Britishers had given a prize of rupees fifty thousand to king Jagannath Singh for this treachery.

Begum Hazrat Mahal, Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope etc. all were distressed by death of Maulvi Ahmedshah. But, at the same time their anger towards Britishers also multiplied. Historian Malleson has written—"Maulvi Ahmedshah of Faizabad died in this way. If a man, independence of whose motherland has been robbed and who tries to re-establish its independence and who wages war, staking his life, can be called a patriot, there cannot be an iota of doubt that Maulvi Ahmedshah was a true patriot. He had not disgraced his sword by killing somebody deceitfully. He had never approved killing of any unarmed and innocent man. He manfully fought in open battlefield with those foreigners who had snatched away his

country. Brave and true residents of this country should remember Maulvi Ahmedshah with respect." (*Malleson : Indian Mutiny Vol. 4, P./381*)

Thus, even after the fall of Delhi, elimination of rebels of Lucknow and Kanpur, revolutionary leaders remained determined to take the freedom struggle to its desired end. In Kalpi Tatya Tope had strengthened his position and he was continuously striving to strengthen it further—with cooperation of people.

Centre of Revolution : Kalpi

Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope were in Kalpi and besides fortifying military power, were busy chalking out future strategy. Revolution had spread throughout the country but due to lack of leadership, discipline, mutual coordination and unity it was proving to be inadequate despite being larger in size than British forces. Although most sections of Indian soldiers in the British Army had revolted, it is also a matter of surprise that soldiers of some provinces of India were fighting for Britishers so that their own country came under their subjugation. We can call it only an irony that by using our own strength, Britishers dispersed us and succeeded in making us their slaves. But brave true patriots fought till their last breath in the freedom struggle of 1857 and never accepted defeat. One such brave man was Tatya Tope who was braver and more farsighted than his master Nana Saheb but it was his misfortune that people were not prepared to obey his orders—because he was a subordinate of the Peshwa. Despite this, Tatya Tope showed his patriotism and did not allow any inferiority complex to set within him.

Till now Kalpi was his headquarter. In a way, Tatya had established an independent state in Kalpi. But he did everything there on orders of Nana Saheb. As a representative of Peshwa he had started collecting tax from landlords of nearby villages. In fact, money was badly needed to buy ammunition and guns and meeting expenses on forces. Nana could not bring his treasure from Bithur and it was plundered by Britishers later.

Hence, all landlords coming within boundaries of Kalpi were issued orders to pay taxes. Boundaries of Kalpi at that time stretched from south bank of Yamuna river upto the boundary of Gwalior state. For administering the state Tatya Tope had established check posts at various places and appointed his trusted military officers there. Tatya had appointed special force at wharfs on Yamuna banks. Landlords were asked to deposit their tax to these soldiers. Besides buying rifles, guns, ammunition for war, Tatya had caused to open some factories in Kalpi to manufacture arms. A British historian has presented the details of Tatya's efforts in preparations for war and manufacture of arms in the following words—"In the fort, in houses and tents of enemies (Tatya Tope) blacksmiths and carpenters were working round the clock. These people made shells and bullets. This work was carried out at many places in the city. Bullets, made of brass, was superior in quality. For making shells there was a vast stock of gun powder. Seeing the quantity of arms being made anyone could guess that preparations were for a long-drawn war." This full account tells us that Tatya understood military tactics well. An Intelligence organisation was included in his military strategy that was spread in all directions and conveyed to Tatya news from all areas.

There was a princely state in Bundelkhand—Charkhari. This old city exists even today. Charkhari is 95 miles away from Jhansi. When the revolution of 1857 spread, King Ratansingh was dual minded, whether to participate in revolution or to support Britishers. Initially he gave impression to both sides that he was with them. In the meantime, revolt took place in another city of Bundelkhand—Hamirpur. The Administrator of that place, Subedar Ali Baksha raised the flag of revolt against Britishers and posing himself to be a

representative of Mughal emperor Bahadurshah became its ruler. Ratansingh thought that if he pleased Ali Baksha, revolutionaries would think that he was on their side. But, at the same time, the collector of Hamirpur asked Ratansingh to send one hundred soldiers to subdue the revolt. Ratansingh did not want to turn down Britishers' request. So, he sent hundred soldiers to him. Then Mahoba's collector Karny also asked Ratansingh for some military help. Ratansingh didn't want to displease him too. But, by then revolt flared up in Mahoba. Its British collector Karny fled and came to Charkhari. Ratansingh arranged his stay in his palace. But now Ratansingh was afraid of Tatya Tope lest the latter came to know about his giving shelter to Britishers; Tatya would not spare him. So he wrote a letter to Tatya saying that he was with Tatya and accepted his supremacy. Tatya Tope thought that this scheming king could deceive him anytime and may even allow Charkhari to be made a Britishers' cantonment. If that happened, it will be a very dangerous thing for Kalpi. Hence, Tatya Tope reached Charkhari with his forces. Ratansingh was flustered by this attack of Tatya and asked help from neighbouring kings. But nobody helped him. Rather, landlords and kings of small princely states in that area helped Tatya Tope against Charkhari. When Ratansingh came to know that Tatya Tope was coming to capture Charkhari with forces of neighbouring princely states, he became nervous. He saw the end of his kingdom. Now he had support of Britishers only. So he entreated the Governor-General to help him out, giving all details. But British force did not come. Tatya Tope attacked Charkhari.

King of Charkhari was sure that British army would definitely come for his help, so he thought it proper to check the entry of Tatya's forces in Charkhari with his own forces. He set out with his forces and crashed into Tatya's forces,

thirty miles away from the city. His force checked Tatya's forces from advancing for eleven days. But due to not getting any help and losing much of his forces Ratansingh withdrew and leaving his palace he went into the fort. When Tatya Tope entered the city, he did not face any kind of resistance. Due to feeling of patriotism having been sunk deep in people's hearts, Tatya Tope was given rather a hero's welcome.

Ratansingh had already given shelter to Mahoba's collector Karny in his fort. Revolutionary forces came to know about this. Now, when Ratansingh was also in the fort, soldiers asked him to turn Karny out and hand him over to them. Ratansingh had promised Karny to defend him. On the other side Tatya increased pressure and ordered to arrest Ratansingh and search the fort to get hold of Karny. Then Ratansingh attired Karny in ladies' dress and made him join fort's ladies because ladies were not to be searched. Ratansingh surrendered and lied that Karny was not in the fort. Thus, finding an opportunity, Karny somehow sneaked out from Charkhari. Ratansingh's palace was plundered. As compensation of the conflict rupees three lakhs were also charged from him. Thus, Charkhari came under Tatya Tope's possession.

In central India flames of revolution were still flaring. Besides forces of Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope most small princely states of this region, Nawab of Banda, King of Banpur, King of Shahgarh etc. all had revolted and come to the side of revolutionary forces. At that time Jhansi was the largest princely state in this region. Revolt against Britishers had flared up there too which was being led by Jhansi's queen Laxmibai. We have mentioned earlier that Laxmibai, whose childhood name was Manu and who was the daughter of Peshwa's loyalist Moropant, was married to Gangadhar Rao, the king of Jhansi. Nana Saheb regarded her his sister and she had learned using weapons with him, Tatya etc.

During Peshwa's rule one of their Subedars used to rule Jhansi. Gradually it became hereditary but the king of Jhansi always remained under Peshwas. When the Company entered into a peace treaty with the then ruler of Jhansi in 1817, Company government promised therein that the entire Kingdom of Jhansi "will be allowed to remain for ever with king Ramchandra Rao, his heirs and descendants on hereditary basis." In 1853, the then king of Jhansi Gangadhar Rao died on 21st November. Before his death he had duly adopted the son of his close relative who belonged to his lineage, Damodar Rao. Therefore, after his death Damodar Rao became the heir of his throne. The queen of Jhansi Laxmibai coronated Damodar Rao and took the reins of power on his behalf in her hands. But the policy of British Governor-General Lord Dalhousie was to usurp princely states of India. So, by a declaration made on 13th March 1854, he merged the state of Jhansi in Company's rule by force. Flames of taking revenge from Britishers against this injustice had flared in hearts of the queen and people of Jhansi both. When revolt flared up throughout India in 1857, Jhansi also declared itself independent.

Historians write—"As was pre-determined, revolution began in Jhansi on 4th June 1857. After the 1854 Declaration Company's army had reached Jhansi. Jhansi was in possession of the Company. First of all, sergeant of 12th indigenous regiment Gurubaksha Singh took possession of Magazine and treasury on 4th June. Thereafter, Rani Laxmibai came out of the palace and after arming herself accepted command of the revolutionary force. At that time, Rani Laxmibai was only 21 years old. On 7th June Risaldar (commander of a troop of mounted force) Kale Khan and Tehsildar Mohammed Hussain attacked the fort on Rani's behalf. Indigenous force which

was already present inside the fort also supported the revolutionary force in this attack. It is said that on 8th June, on orders of Risaldar Kale Khan 67 British men, women and children inside the fort were killed. Historian Sir John K. writes that Rani Laxmibai had no connection with this carnage; neither any of her men was present on the occasion nor she had permitted it. In this way Company's rule on Jhansi was ended on 8th June itself. In capacity of the child Damodar Rao's guardian, Rani Laxmibai again occupied the throne of Jhansi. Jhansi became free." (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj : Sunderlal, P./858*).

All areas like Kalpi, Jhansi etc. of central India had become centres of freedom movement. To subdue revolution in this entire region had become a prestige issue for Company government. It was necessary to do something in central India, like what Neil and Campbell had done in Awadh to subdue revolution. To crush revolution in central India, Company government made a concrete plan at the end of 1857, the name of which was 'Central India Field Force'. Under this plan, a British force under Sir Hurose was to start from Mahu (near Indore) to crush revolution in Chanderi and Jhansi. Another force 'Rajputana Field Force' under Major General Roberts was to start from Bombay to crush revolution in Awadh and Kota. The third force, 'Sagar Field Force' under the command of Whitlock was to set out from Jabalpur to reach Bundelkhand and Banda. All three forces were expected to exert pressure from all sides so that they could help each other, if needed.

Sir Hurose had good knowledge of war methods. In addition, he was an astute politician too. He had alighted in Bombay in September 1857. He was to take command of Poona Division. Before this, he had worked in French Army Headquarters as a Commissioner of Her Majesty. Sir Hurose had a vast army in which forces of Hyderabad, Bhopal and

other pro-British princely states were included. On 6th January 1858, Sir Hurose marched from Mahu (near Indore) and reached near Jhansi on 20th March winning Rajgarh, Sagar, Banpur, Chanderi etc. on his way. At that time, in addition to King Mardan Singh of Banpur, many kings and chieftains were present in Jhansi to help Rani Laxmibai.

When Hurose attacked Jhansi, Rani Laxmibai sought help from Nana Saheb. Nana Saheb sent Tatya Tope with force to check Hurose. Tatya had the same force that had come from Gwalior and which had won Charkhari recently. Hence, it was rather too much intoxicated by its valour. Sir Hurose was informed by his spies about the arrival of Tatya Tope. Hurose divided his army in many parts and got ready to face Tatya's forces. Tatya Tope did not understand this strategy of Hurose. He thought that British army was small. So, Tatya directly sent a part of his forces to defend the fort of Jhansi. But Sir Hurose had a contingent of his army hidden there. It suddenly attacked Tatya's force. The attack was so unexpected and powerful that it became difficult for Tatya's forces to recover and it could not do anything but to flee from there. Tatya had kept a contingent hidden in the forest near the bank of Betwa river. Hurose came to know about it. He sent a force there to drive it away. Thus, in both these campaigns one and a half thousand soldiers of Tatya got killed.

Eventually Tatya wasn't able to help Jhansi. In the meantime, Sir Hurose got a message from Governor-General in which he was asked to go and help the king of Charkhari. But Hurose was in a dilemma. If he proceeded towards Charkhari, Tatya would reach Jhansi. He thought what was the harm if Charkhari went into Tatya's hands. We are here to take care of Jhansi. So Hurose moved towards Jhansi.

On 22nd March 1858 British army, under the command of Sir Hurose surrounded Jhansi. First of all, on 24th March,

a gun named 'Ghangaraj' started bombarding Company's forces. Thereafter shells were fired continuously from both sides and this war continued for eight days. Historians write— "All gates and windows allowing entrance and exit from that fort, were closed. The fort being too strong, rain of shells was not able to damage it. A defending army of 1500 Bundel and Afghan soldiers and 20 guns were inside the fort. Their operation was in hands of efficient artillerymen. All were dedicated to the Rani and fought valiantly under her inspiring leadership amidst terrible bombarding and firing of bullets by enemies. Their guns were rested during night only. Women were also helping in shelling and were bringing ammunition for guns." (*Dr. Surendranath Sen : 1857*).

Rani Laxmibai held out valiantly. But she needed military help to defeat Britishers. Rani was expecting Tatya's arrival but Tatya had failed once in his attempt to check Sir Hurose. Now he reached Jhansi with a vast army. He had twenty thousand soldiers with him. This force came from behind and surrounded Sir Hurose. Now Hurose had to fight on two fronts. But he was not flustered. He was a brilliant General. He had no difficulty in not allowing his encirclement of Jhansi loose its grip. He set out to fight Tatya's army with a small force. Tatya's army was on the bank of Betwa river. On 1st April Hurose attacked Tatya's army with terrible bombarding. Tatya's army had no guns matching the fire power of Britishers' guns. The result was that in face of Britishers' bombarding Tatya's army lost ground; it got scattered and fled.

Thus, the position of Jhansi was getting weaker day by day. Although Rani Laxmibai was left alone to fight, she did not lose heart. British army carried out its last attack on Jhansi's fort on 3rd April. Fierce fighting began. Firing by guns and rifles was on from all directions. Rani Laxmibai on horseback

was moving around inspiring her soldiers and officers. British army first exerted pressure at the north gate of Jhansi. Eight ladders were set to climb up the fort's wall. British officers Dick and Mitchel John climbed up a ladder and called their companions to come up but just at that moment two shots were fired from Rani's side and both Englishmen fell off the ladder. War on that day was so fierce that Britishers were finding it difficult to hold out. At this point of time, when fierce fighting was going on at the north gate, Dulhasingh Pardeshi, a traitor, opened the south gate of the city of Jhansi, British force was on a killing spree. It moved towards the fort. Rani saw the plight of Jhansi due to treachery and her heart was filled with despair. But the next moment she recovered herself. She took a thousand soldiers with her and moved forward to take on the British force. Historians have described this battle and prevailing circumstances in these words—"Both sides threw away their rifles and fought with swords. Both sides suffered casualties. Company's force had to withdraw a bit. At this time, somebody came and told Rani Laxmibai that the Guard of the main Gate, Khudabaksha and the officer of Artillery, Ghulam Ghouse Khan, were killed. It was clear that now north gate was also open for the enemy. This broke Rani's heart. For a moment she thought of setting the magazine on fire herself and end her life in its flames. Then, after a little consideration she thought it proper to leave Jhansi. Jhansi came under Company's rule."

Now, the queen of Jhansi, Laxmibai set out from Jhansi at night time, leaving it for ever. She was in men's dress and armed and tying her adopted son Damodar Rao to her waist she climbed up wall of the fort and jumped on the back of an elephant outside. Then riding her pet white horse she proceeded towards Kalpi. There were ten-fifteen armed mounted men with her.

At that time, Nana Saheb, his son Rao Saheb, Tatya Tope, Nawab of Banda, Kings of Shahgarh and Banpur and many revolutionary leaders were present in Kalpi. It is said that Lieutenant Walker had pursued Laxmibai but he did not succeed in getting hold of her. Rani reached Bhander village on 5th April. After finishing morning chores she had just fed milk to Damodar Rao and taken the bowl of milk to her mouth news came that Britishers pursuing her, were about to reach there. Rani immediately got ready and riding the horse she encountered Walker. A wounded Lt. Walker went back. Speeding the horse she reached Kalpi. Night had fallen then. Peshwa Rao Saheb arranged for her stay.

The writer of the book, 'Rani Laxmibai Ka Jivan Charitra', Dattatreya Balwant Parasnis has written extensively about what happened after Rani Laxmibai reached Kalpi. According to that account, next day Rani Laxmibai met Peshwa Nana Saheb. Rani Laxmibai was unhappy for not getting help from Tatya's force in time. When she came up to Peshwa Nana Saheb, it is said that she had tears in her eyes. She placed the sword, that was given to her by Peshwas, before Nana Saheb and said—"This is the sword of your ancestors. It was given to me in return of your service and it has been used till today by our dynasty by their grace. But I no longer have your grace. Therefore, I have no right to keep this sword."

Witnessing this, all courtiers were stunned. Tatya Tope himself felt frustrated for not being helpful to the Rani despite his will to do so and also because of failure of his strategies. He was also sitting there but he lowered his head quietly. Nana Dhundhupant Peshwa praised valour and courage of Rani Laxmibai and explained how military help sent by him did not reach upto her. But there was time yet. We will come together and put all our might. We will get our state and our glory back. Rani felt relieved by these words of Nana Saheb.

Tatya Tope said—"Our play has just begun. We have to sit together and chalk out our strategy because Britishers have not become quiet yet. Therefore, Rani Sahiba, please cooperate with us. We will definitely win."

The size of the army in Kalpi at that time was sufficient to drive Britishers out of India. But the major defect in this army was that there was no one who could get his orders obeyed by all and who was, at the same time, also shrewd in military tactics. Rani Laxmibai was able, brave and courageous but she was a woman and her age was only twenty two years. Being a woman and so young, she wasn't acceptable to warriors of older age as their commander, even if they had lesser ability. Tatya Tope was also brave and a very efficient man but for one, he was born in an ordinary family and secondly he had always remained a subordinate to the Peshwas. Hence, it wasn't easy at that time for hereditary Kings to work under a woman or a man born in an ordinary family. Delhi had fallen because of this deficiency only. Still, Rani Laxmibai did not lose heart. She reached Kaunch, a village forty two miles away from Kalpi, alone with a small force. At that time army of Sir Hurose was camping at Poonchh, a place fourteen miles away from Kaunch. Between these two places there were many small forts which were captured by Tatya Tope. When Tatya Tope came to know about Hurose's presence there and his future plans, he came to Kaunch with his force. Tatya had laid his trap in front of the town whereas spies of Hurose had told him about the location of Tatya's forces; hence, the forces of Hurose attacked stealthily and from behind. In this situation Tatya carefully removed his force from there without any damage. In the beginning of that battle Tatya and Rani Laxmibai's force suffered some losses. But Malleson has praised the orderliness and military operation of Indian Revolutionary Army. Historian G.B. Malleson writes in the

book, 'Indian Mutiny' about this battle—"The efficiency with which Tatya Tope withdrew his forces was possible for a disciplined and orderly force only. That force does not do anything in haste. There was neither any disorder nor any anxiety to reach to safety. Everything was being done in a very orderly manner. Soldiers would fire and then rush to back row to load the rifle again. As soon as one soldier moved from the first row, another soldier from the back row would come in his place and fire. Then they would come back, load their guns and get ready to fire."

Although Tatya Tope, Rani Laxmibai and Nawab of Banda fought valiantly, they had to face defeat in the battle of Kaunch. The defeat at Kaunch weakened very much the spirit of revolutionary force. They started blaming each other for the defeat. Some said that cavaliers of Rani Laxmibai proved to be very inadequate. Some others blamed Tatya Tope and Nana Saheb for it. Because of these differences, when, after the Kaunch battle, future strategy was being considered at Kalpi, Rao Saheb and Nawab of Banda assumed full control of talks in their hands. Tatya Tope and Rani Laxmibai were not given any important role to play. This caused much dissatisfaction in the army.

Now, Sir Hurose made a plan to attack Kalpi. Despite sudden onset of summer his force showed irrepressible courage. Some small groups of revolutionaries tried unsuccessfully to check Sir Hurose on way. After getting the news of Sir Hurose's arrival revolutionary forces had to get ready to take him on. Kalpi was the only centre that was safe for rebels and Tatya had stored a lot of ammunition there. G. B. Malleson writes in the book, 'The Revolt in India'—"So long as Kalpi was in Rebels' possession, they could say with some pride that may be eastern and western India was in

Britishers' possession, its central part was with them." Sir Hurose made Gulouli, a place six miles away from Kalpi, his stop and he attacked Kalpi on 22nd May 1858. In response to this attack revolutionary army fought resolutely. Rani Laxmibai invigorated her defeated army. She herself moved forward with her cavaliers to take on Sir Hurose. Both forces fought fiercely. Once it seemed that British army was losing ground. Artillery men of the Company left their guns and ran away. Laxmibai was in the front row. Sir Hurose moved forward to take her on. After fierce fighting Britishers won. On 24th May British forces occupied Kalpi's fort. Nana Saheb, Baba Saheb, Tatya Tope etc. all had run away from Kalpi. Seven hundred mounds of ammunition, innumerable weapons and war-material inside the fort went to Britishers' hands. Rani Laxmibai, Nawab of Banda and Rao Saheb also moved away from Kalpi with the remaining force. Historians write—"Revolutionaries now had neither war material nor an adequate army nor any fort. Even so, Laxmibai and Tatya Tope did not lose heart. Tatya set out secretly and reached Gwalior. In Gwalior he brought Maharaja Scindia's army to his side. Then, with this new force he returned again. Tatya, Laxmibai, Nawab of Banda and Rao Saheb met again in Gopalpur. Laxmibai suggested Rao Saheb to capture Gwalior first so that revolutionaries could get a new centre. On 28th May 1858 all revolutionary leaders reached near Gwalior. On 1st June 1858 Jayajirao Scindia came to take them on with his guns and armed force. Guessing Scindia's intentions Rani Laxmibai attacked his force. On the other hand, Scindia's army had already promised Tatya that it was with him. The result was that Gwalior army came on the side of revolutionaries. Jayajirao Scindia and his minister Dinkar Rao fled from the battlefield. Gwalior army gave salutation with guns to Rao Saheb taking him as a representative of Nana Saheb Peshwa. On 3rd June 1858 a

very big royal court was convened in Phoolbagh. A number of noblemen, chieftains and rich men took their seats. Arabian, Ruhel, Rajput and Maratha regiments, in their respective uniforms were gathered in the court. Peshwa's turban was put on Rao Saheb's head. Rao Saheb was accepted as a Peshwa. Tatya Tope was appointed commander-in-chief. Rupees thirty lakhs were distributed among army personnel." (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj : Sunderlal, P./943-44*).

It wasn't proper to hold Rao Saheb's court and celebrate in Gwalior. As Nana Saheb had given all his rights to Rao Saheb in Kalpi itself, latter's orders only were acceptable to revolutionary army. But the truth was that Rao Saheb was a worthless man. He knew neither to run administration nor war tactics. Only because he was Nana Saheb's heir, he always remained in the state of intoxication of power and used to take senseless decisions. Keeping this in view, Laxmibai had once told Nana Saheb in Kalpi that unless the command of our army is not entrusted to an experienced and able man, we should expect victory in this war. It was only due to lack of leadership quality in Rao Saheb that forgetting the coming dangers from the enemy, he was engrossed in a life of comforts and songs and dance in Gwalior. Rani Laxmibai had warned him of coming dangers and emphasized that at this juncture we should forget everything else and should concentrate only on organising our army so that it was ready for a war. As heavy loss of ammunition was suffered in Kalpi earlier, it has also become necessary to ensure its availability for a future war. But Rao Saheb and other leaders did not heed this advice of the Rani. Rani Laxmibai was a farsighted lady. She knew that British army would not let Gwalior go out of their hands like that. But despite her concern for a future danger, Rao Saheb etc. ignored it.

Another farsighted General Tatya Tope was also there. But seeing his rising influence and his becoming commander-in-chief, leaders of many forces had become jealous of him. They found it disgraceful to fight under his leadership. This was the reason that all decisions were being taken by Rao Saheb only. Although it is true that none could match the valour and military prowess, Tatya's only defect was that he did not belong to a royal family. Although such discriminations were absolutely uncalled for, if 1857 revolution is reviewed, such discrimination between high and low, between rich and poor alone became the cause of treachery, failure and advantage to Britishers.

As apprehended by Rani Laxmibai, Sir Hurose was making all preparations to attack Gwalior. Historian G.B. Malleson writes—"Sir Hurose was aware that any delay at that stage was bound to cause irreparable damage. If Gwalior was not snatched immediately from revolutionaries, no one could tell how bad the consequences would be. If rebels got an opportunity, Tatya Tope, whose political and military power has risen immeasurably after capturing Gwalior and who, presently has all men, wealth and material of Gwalior with him, will raise a new army on the basis of the defeated force of Kalpi and create a Maratha uprising all over India. Tatya Tope is very shrewd in this job. In these circumstances it is possible that by waving the flag of Peshwas he may incite the people of southern districts of Maharashtra. If revolutionaries got good success in Central India, it is possible that people of south may rise again for that state of Peshwas for which their ancestors had fought wars and shed their blood." (*Malleson : Indian Mutiny Vol. 5, P./149-50*).

Sir Hurose made huge preparations for attacking Gwalior. On 5th June 1858 Sir Hurose chalked out the plan to attack

Gwalior with the army of Brig. Napier. He sent messages to Major to attack Gwalior from southern side and to Brig. Smith to attack from the side of Kot Sarai. Col. Russel was to come from Agra-Gwalior road. On 16th June 1858 Sir Hurose reached Bahadurgarh, a place near Gwalior with British forces. He gathered information about revolutionary forces there. His spies told him that the forces were presently enjoying music and dancing. Although Rani Laxmibai and Tatya Tope have kept the forces on alert, those were still in loose shape. Hurose considered this to be the most opportune time to attack. It is certainly true that seeing the capriciousness of their so-called big leaders, revolutionary forces themselves had become oblivious to the possibility of an attack by enemy and they had not taken instructions of the Rani and Tatya Tope seriously.

On 17th June Hurose set guns on the hills of Kot Sarai and attacked suddenly. None was prepared for this sudden attack. It is said that soldiers were not even in their uniforms. All were startled hearing the roar of guns. Rao Saheb asked Tatya Tope to deal with the aggressors and indulged again in merriment. Britishers had executed a well-planned attack while revolutionary army was still getting ready and chalking out a strategy. First of all Tatya Tope moved forward with some force to take the enemy on. Sir Hurose attacked swiftly this infantry of Tatya Tope. Tatya's army too rained shells on them. But by then cavalry of Hurose executed a fierce attack from behind. Britishers captured Morar cantonment. Hearing this Rao Saheb was flustered. In the meantime, Rani Laxmibai assembled her force and moved forward to confront them. She positioned her force and took the responsibility to defend the eastern gate of city on herself. Chief Commander Gen. Smith also moved towards Gwalior with a big force and he

asked Col. Hicks and Capt. Hawes to attack Maharani's infantry and artillery. Rani's army could not hold out against this attack. But Rani organised her force yet again. Now Rani held the front at eastern gate because Gen. Smith's army had reached up to eastern gate. She frustrated every attack of Smith's army with courage. Historians write that on that day Rani Laxmibai was seen riding the horse moving like thunder from this end to that from morning till evening. Gen. Smith had to withdraw against her onslaught.

It must be mentioned here that at that time many revolutionaries like Tatya Tope, Rao Saheb etc. were present in Gwalior but none came to help Rani Laxmibai. The main reason of this was that she was a woman and these brave men could not brook fighting under her command even if Britishers won in the end and British empire took roots in India.

But Rani Laxmibai had extraordinary valour; she was perhaps much more courageous, brave, skilled warrior and farsighted than all her male counterparts. How strange it is that people like Rao Saheb were having fun while it was a prestige issue for a commander like Tatya Tope as to how he could fight under the command of a woman. While a lone woman set out on 18th June 1858 with two of her brave female friends for her last battle.

On 18th June 1858 Gen. Smith and Sir Hurose came with their forces to attack the eastern gate of Gwalior fort. From this side Rani Laxmibai along with two brave female friends reached there with her forces to confront them. Describing that day's battle, an eyewitness Britisher has written—"The beautiful queen reached swiftly to the battlefront. She resolutely raised her force to take on Sir Hurose's army. She repeatedly attacked his army with

vehement speed. At many places Rani's contingent was pierced by shells of enemy. The strength of her force was continuously getting reduced, still the queen was seen ahead of all. She continued to organise her scattered force and proved her extraordinary valour at every step. But all this did not work. Sir Hurose himself moved forward with his cavaliers and broke the last defensive formation of queen Laxmibai. Even then, the brave and fearless queen held out at her place."

After this, more British force came there. Rani was still fighting alone and no revolutionary leader or force had come to help her. Due to arrival of fresh British force Rani was surrounded from all sides. Even then she continued to fight with full courage. But with the intention of saving herself for now and fight later, she speeded her horse. The horse stopped at a small brook. It could not jump over the brook. British soldiers came from behind and they surrounded the Rani. She was struck many times. Despite the fact that she was wounded she struck and felled many British soldiers. Eventually, gravely injured Rani fell from her horse. Historians write that Ramchandra Rao Deshmukh, a loyal servant of the Rani was with her at that time. He carried her to a nearby hut of Sadhu Baba Gangadas. There he gave her water to drink and that brave woman took her last breath. Britishers captured Gwalior. Nana Saheb, Rao Saheb, Tatya Tope etc. fled from Gwalior.

Great Warrior of the First Freedom Struggle

With the defeat in Gwalior the first freedom struggle of 1857 ended. Nana Saheb, Rao Saheb and Tatya Tope—all had taken their own routes. Nothing was known about Nana Saheb. Rao Saheb was caught later and he was hanged.

Now Tatya Tope was all alone. He had neither a force, war material nor any place to reside. But he was a brave and courageous man. Hence, despite being alone he was not one of those who accept defeat and surrender. He had lost popularity and due to fear of repression by Britishers, no one wanted either to help him or contribute for raising a revolutionary army yet again. As soon as people got information that Nana Saheb Tatya Tope were coming they would shut their doors. They shunned meeting Tatya Tope. That is why he felt that first of all he should regain the lost support of people. In his book, 'Recollections of the Campaign in Malwa and Central India', British writer J.H. Sylvester has written—"Tatya had probably felt that it was difficult to wage war without popular support. People were not against freedom struggle but they were also afraid of atrocities perpetrated by Britishers after revolt. Another reason was that the spark of revolution was getting extinguished everywhere. Britishers' authority was being established everywhere. In these circumstances, it was certainly difficult for Tatya to garner people's support but it was also unavoidable. So he would get

announcements made in villages, get posters in the name of Rao Saheb Peshwa pasted and give message that their army was fighting against Britishers and not against people. Hence villagers should have no apprehension that revolutionary forces were coming for plunder. Everything needed by our army would be purchased and that too on higher prices. But if someone refused to sell such goods, it will be acquired by force."

Tatya's another problem was to raise a new army. His attention was drawn towards military contingents of Indian princely states. He still trusted loyalty of these contingents and as a matter fact Tatya Tope had the remarkable ability to organise army and because of this his trust had not weakened. Now Tatya had also got the help of tribal and local people. His army now had such people too who could fight in jungles. Infact, now Tatya Tope did not consider it proper to wage a direct war with Britishers. Now he was adopting the strategy of 'Gorilla War'.

Tatya Tope thought of going to south and organising rulers there for revolt in the name of Peshwa. He wanted to go to Maharashtra after crossing Narmada river. But Britishers came to know about his intentions. On 22nd June 1858 British army encircled Tatya Tope in Jaura Alipur. But Tatya set out safely from there. Britishers did not want to let him cross Narmada river at any cost. Hence, now Tatya moved towards Bharatpur. Then he turned towards Jaipur. People and army of Jaipur respected Tatya. Tatya informed them to remain prepared. But, spies of Britishers were watching every activity of Tatya and informing their lords. By the time Tatya reached Jaipur, a British force moved from Nasirabad to Jaipur to take on Tatya. This made Tatya to move southwards. But Colonel Holmes and his force continued to pursue him. In fact, British army

wanted to arrest Tatya Tope at any cost but he was defying them.

An Englishman J.H. Sylvester had an important role in the job of planning to pursue and arrest Tatya Tope and implementing military strategy. In his book *'Recollections of the campaign in Malwa and Central India' (P.196-98)*, he has written extensively about Tatya's art of 'Gorilla War'. He writes—"This briskly walking Gorilla commander did not carry any kind of paraphernalia—like tents, canvas screens, food items—with him. Whenever he needed these things, he used to plunder them. When his horses became useless, he used to leave them on way to die and acquire new horses by way of plunder—he plundered these horses from our check posts or by attacking the row of vehicles carrying our war material. They followed us like shadow and Tatya's cavaliers pounced upon our cavalry whenever it got tired because of long journey or moved slowly after getting weighed down by equipment etc. and plundered them. Every new commander wanted to get hold of him. For this, lot of pain was taken, at times soldiers had to leave their tents and other goods—but attempt was, not to let any opportunity go out of hands to pursue Tatya. If soldiers of British army covered a distance of forty miles a day, Tatya covered fifty miles and did not oblige them. The result was that our horses would get tired and we would have to halt at some place to take rest. What was remarkable was that a lot of strength was lost in this unending chase. Bodies of hundreds of dead camels would be left behind on way. Pursuers or those running ahead did not care for roads or rivers. They would run and run till they ran short of breath. One good thing with Tatya was that he had very good informers with him. Wherever enemy forces came near him, they would inform Tatya about it and they never allowed their identity

to be revealed. Our informers were not so good, although they were trusted men of our friendly rulers. People's sympathy was with Tatya Tope and they had no difficulty in getting supplies etc. whereas we had to struggle to get a crumb to eat."

Rao Saheb and Nawab of Banda had parted Tatya's company on the day Tatya had proceeded towards Jaipur after crossing Chambal river. Tatya had remained alone but he was not losing heart. Instead of going to Jaipur, Tatya took the route to Tonk. He asked for Nawab of Tonk, Wazir Mohammed Khan's help but instead of helping, the latter shut the city's gates and sent his meagre force with four guns to take on Tatya. But that force sided with Tatya and entrusted those guns also to Tatya. Now Tatya moved towards Indragarh with his force and guns. But rainy season had begun and Chambal river was flooded. On the other hand, pursuing Tatya Tope, Gen. Roberts was coming. So, Tatya considered it proper to go to Bundi. Col. Holmes was also coming with force to encircle Tatya. Tatya had expected help from Bundi's ruler but he was disappointed. Then he reached village Cheeni and acquired food supplies by force. Tatya had just reached Dabla village and he had to encounter Roberts' force there. Roberts had a much larger force than Tatya. Under compulsion Tatya had to flee, leaving some guns there—because he had got the news that Col. Smith was also coming for Roberts' help. Now Tatya reached Nathdwara. Roberts was still pursuing him. Tatya and his soldiers were tired. So, after visiting the temple Tatya thought it proper to have some rest. After spending the night at Nathdwara, Tatya had to encounter Roberts in early morning. British force again proved to be mightier. Tatya had to flee after some fighting—leaving some guns behind.

Now Tatya started moving towards Chambal. He was being encircled by British forces. One army was coming from behind, second was advancing from right side and the third was waiting at Chambal bank. Still, after misleading them Tatya succeeded in reaching swiftly to the bank of Chambal. He crossed Chambal too but they had neither food supplies nor guns. Then Tatya proceeded straight to Jhalarapatan. Its ruler was on the side of Britishers. So he came out to take on Tatya. But after meeting Tatya the King's force went against the King and supporting Tatya it agreed to obey his orders. Tatya encircled King's palace. The King gave Tatya rupees fifteen lakhs. That solved Tatya's problems relating to army, supplies, ammunition etc.

In Jhalarapatan Tatya decided to garner support of King Holkar of Indore. Some spies were sent in the first instance. Then Tatya set out for Indore. At that time Maj. General Mitchel and his force were camping in Malwa. He got the news of Tatya's arrival in Indore. He set out with force alongwith Col. Lokhart, Hope Grant etc., so that they could stop Tatya on his way. Tatya's force had to fight a battle with Mitchel's army at Raigarh. Mitchel's attack was so powerful that it became difficult for Tatya's force to hold out. Eventually, Tatya had to flee, leaving about thirty guns behind.

Tatya Tope now sojourned in Sironj. After having rest for eight days there Tatya went to Isagarh, a state under Scindia regime. By this time Tatya had again augmented his army. Now he had fifteen thousand soldiers. After capturing Isagarh, its fort was plundered. In the meantime, Rao Saheb came and joined him. Tatya tried to somehow cross Narmada to go to south. While Britishers were encircling him from all sides. In his book 'The Friend of India', a British writer has described the position and intentions of Tatya Tope at that time in some

detail. He writes—"The sequence of Tatya dodging the British and running away was quite astonishing and it continued for ten months. That gave the impression that we had won. Because of this sequence Tatya's name had become more famous all over Europe, compared to most of our British commanders. But the problem before Tatya wasn't easy. He had to continuously move with his disorderly force so fast that not only the armies pursuing him but also the armies that suddenly attacked him from right or left could not do anything but fret. At one hand Tatya moved his force furiously and captured dozens of towns on the other. He would arrange new war material, new guns from here and there and apart from these, he would recruit new volunteer soldiers who had to run continuously at the speed of sixty miles a day. Whatever Tatya has achieved with his meagre resources proves that he had no ordinary ability. He was of the same quality that distinguished Hyder Ali. It is said that Tatya wanted to reach Madras via Nagpur. Had he really reached Madras, he would have proved as terrible for us as Hyder Ali had become once. Narmada proved as big a hindrance for him as English channel had proved for Napolean. In the beginning British forces moved as slowly as they were used to. But then they learned under compulsion to move faster. Some journys of Gen. Park and Col. Napier were as fast as half of Tatya's average journeys. Even so, Tatya managed to dodge them. Summer came to an end, all rainy season passed, whole winter passed and then summer came and passed yet again—still Tatya was out of our reach. Sometimes he had two thousand tired soldiers with him and sometimes fifteen thousand."

After conquering Isagarh, Tatya divided his army into two parts. With Rao Saheb joining him, Tatya entrusted one part to him and kept the other under himself. Both detachments wanted to reach Maharashtra, across Narmada, taking different

routes. But British army had encircled them in such a way that they had to encounter British forces at many places. Both detachments continued to move forward and they met in Lalitpur. Describing the position of British army at the time, historions write—"Mitchel's army from south, Col. Lindel's army from the east, Col. Mead's army from north, Col. Park's army from west and an army under Gen. Roberts from the direction of Chambal—thus five British armies encircled Tatya. To dodge British forces, Tatya now gave up the idea of going to south and moved swiftly towards north. But he suddenly took another turn. He quickly crossed Betwa river and fought a battle with British force at Kajuri. From there he reached Raigarh and then rushed straight like an arrow towards south. Britishers were flustered by his tactics. Col. Park rushed from one side, Mitchel rushed from behind, Baker rushed towards Tatya from the front, but Tatya, alongwith his army, managed to reach Narmada and astonishing world's best war tacticians, crossed Narmada from a point near Hoshangabad." (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj : Sunderlal, P./959*).

British historians too have praised these brilliant tactics of Tatya Tope. A correspondent wrote in the 12th January 1859 issue of 'London Times'—"Our extraordinary friend Tatya Tope is so troublesome and cunning enemy that he cannot be praised enough. He has created havoc in central India since last June. He has crushed our military bases, plundered our treasuries and emptied our magazines. He has raised armies and lost them, fought battles and suffered defeats, he has snatched guns from indigenous rulers, then lost them, acquired them again and lost them too. Thereafter, his journeys seem to be like lightning. He has travelled thirty-forty miles a day for weeks together. Sometimes this side of Narmada and sometimes that side. Sometimes he has passed through our

armed forces, sometimes through valleys, through marshy lands, sometimes from front, or from back side, sometimes from sideways and sometimes taking a round—but he never came in our grasp."

At last, Tatya Tope reached near Nagpur in October 1958. Rao Saheb and Nawab of Banda were also with him. Brig. Hill had blocked their way near Asirgarh. At that time, the command of southern region of the Army was in hands of Sir Hurose. Hurose sent a force to confront Tatya lest he entered Maharashtra through Khandesh. A force was also posted on the hills of Satpura. Altogether, all possible ways of Tatya's entry in Maharashtra were blocked. After getting the news about Tatya's advance towards Nagpur Lord Canning and his associates were very much disturbed. Historian G.B. Malleson writes—"The nephew of the man, whom Maharashtra considered to be valid successor of the last Peshwa, had reached on the soil of Maharashtra with his force. Nizam was loyal to us. But it was a strange time. There were instances in which whenever a ruler acted against popular feelings, people revolted against that ruler. Such a revolt had taken place against Scindia also. It was necessary for us to apprehend lest Tatya's force was able to incite whole of Maharashtra to take up arms against us. And when entire population of Maharashtra raised arms against foreigners then, seeing this, people of south (i.e. Nizam's areas) too could not be held back." (*Malleson : Indian Mutiny, Vol. 5, P.239-40*).

How much Britishers feared Tatya's entry in Maharashtra and the faith with which Tatya had reached there—all that proved to be baseless. The reason was that Tatya did not get as much support in Nagpur as he had hoped for. What to say of actively supporting Tatya, people avoided even meeting him. A disappointed Tatya Tope then thought of going to

Baroda. The problem was, the army needed supplies. Tatya came to know that supplies for British army were being carried on bullock carts from Agra-Bombay road. Tatya plundered the caravan. On getting the news of this plunder Maj. Sunderland pursued Tatya. They fought with each other. Tatya ordered his army to leave their guns and to jump into Narmada and get across. His men swiftly crossed the river. Now Tatya reached Rajpura. Tatya charged the chieftain of Rajpura some four thousand rupees and some horses. Next day Tatya reached Chhota Udaipur. Chhota Udaipur is fifty miles away from Baroda. Pursuing Tatya Gen. Park reached Chhota Udaipur with his force. Tatya dropped the idea of going to Baroda and instead proceeded towards north.

In the meantime, an announcement of Queen Victoria was circulated all over India. It was stated in the announcement that all rebels who surrender and seek forgiveness, will be granted amnesty. For this, courts were convened in big cities like Meerut, Delhi, Agra etc. so that rebels could come and seek forgiveness. By now the Nawab of Banda, Ali Bahadur had become tired of running continuously. He put arms down and sought forgiveness. He was granted amnesty and a pension of rupees four thousand per month was also sanctioned to him. But Rao Saheb and Tatya Tope were among those revolutionary leaders who neither surrendered nor agreed to seek pardon.

Now Tatya proceeded towards Udaipur (Mewar). At that very time British forces attacked him from all sides. Now it was becoming difficult for Tatya and Rao Saheb to save themselves. Tatya now took refuge in the forests of Banswara.

On 25th December 1858 Tatya came out of forests of Banswara. He had got the news that a descendant of Mughal dynasty, Prince Firozshah wanted to meet him. Freedom struggle had begun in India when prince Firozshah had reached Bombay from Mecca in 1857. When the prince set out from

there for Delhi, rebels made him their leader in Mandsaur and declared him their Nawab. When revolutionaries attacked Agra, prince Firozshah was with them. Thereafter, he went to Lucknow. After he met Maulvi Ahmedshah there, he attacked Shahjahanpur. He played an active role in Awadh's rebellion. Later, when Nana Saheb, Begum Hazrat Mahal had secretly gone to Nepal, he too left Awadh. Britishers were trying to get hold of the prince too. Tatya Tope met prince Firozshah in Indragarh on 13th January 1859. Rao Saheb was also with him. One chieftain of Scindia, Mansingh was also present.

Now Tatya had Firozshah's support too. Sojourning in Dewas they were chalking out future strategy. In fact, at this time Tatya was encircled by Britishers from all sides. Napier came with his force from north, Shawers from north-west, Somerset from east, Smith from south-east, Mitchel and Benson from south—all of them had tightened their grip around Tatya. This was the first occasion when Tatya hadn't got prior information of Britishers' plan for Dewas, otherwise he would have fled. What had happened was that when Rao Saheb, Firozshah and Tatya Tope were deliberating, suddenly the hand of a British officer hit Tatya's waist. It became known that British soldiers had suddenly attacked their tent. But all three leaders cleanly and astonishingly got away from there. British commander Shawers was simply amazed by this sudden disappearance of Tatya.

Tatya reached a place called Seekar via Alwar. But there too vast army of Holmes attacked him. Hence, he had to flee from there too. By now, Tatya had exhausted all war material. Prince Firozshah had also lost hope, so he parted. Firozshah had to confront Col. Holmes' army at Nasirabad. He was defeated there. At first he thought of surrendering but then he did not consider it proper. He secretly went to Mecca, where he died in 1877.

Rao Saheb, who was supporting Tatya till now also parted company. He was also disheartened by continuous conflict and prevailing circumstances. He was caught later and was hanged on 20th August 1862.

Tatya was now all alone. He was tired and all his dreams were shattered. He had started living in forest in hiding with Mansingh. On this side, Britishers had understood it very well that it was impossible to arrest Tatya by military power. Hence it was necessary to trap him by way of some conspiracy.

Command of the British army in Central India was in hands of Sir Robert Napier. He came to know that Tatya Tope was hiding in forests of Padaun with Mansingh. Mansingh was angry with Britishers. The reason for his anger was that Britishers had done injustice to him. There was a small princely state called Narwar near Gwalior. Mansingh's father was the owner of this state that was under Scindia. After his death, Scindia of Gwalior took possession of a part of Narwar. That made Mansingh angry. He reached the fort of Pohri of Gwalior state with a force of ten thousand and captured it. But Scindia reoccupied the Pohri fort with help of Britishers. Then Mansingh met British officers and cried for justice. But Scindia was more important for Britishers than Mansingh. Hence they gave no attention to his request. Since then Mansingh was against Britishers.

Robert Napier felt that if Mansingh could be brought to their side, Tatya, who was with Mansingh at that time, could be easily caught. It is a proven fact that in order to establish their rule in India and for their selfish ends Britishers never hesitated in adopting the policy of eulogy, bribery, threat and guile. It was common to make false promises and going back on them, to indulge in treachery once selfish ends were met and many British historians have deprecated these deeds. Such

a deceitful trick had grown in Robert Napier's heart and he applied his mind to implement it. Napier shared this plan with Mead and asked him as to what could be the expedient to persuade Mansingh. At that time, Pindaris (a criminal tribe) were also hiding in the forests of Padaun. Col. Mead was trying to get hold of their leader, Narain Singh. But, on reconsideration he adopted a soft attitude towards Narain Singh. Giving many tempting offers to Narain Singh Britishers brought him to their side. They promised to give him many privileges and comforts. But with the condition that he would make Mansingh to agree to surrender himself. They assured him that not only Mansingh would be treated well but he would get justice too. It was obvious that Mansingh was startled at first by this offer. But Mead explained to him that we are restoring whole states and pension to surrendering rebels under Queen Victoria's announcement and we want to give its benefit to you too because you have been a loyalist till recently.

Mansingh was trapped by the temptation of getting his state back. In the meantime, Narain Singh arranged a meeting between Kishorilal, the secretary of Mansingh and Prabhu Dayal of Shivpuri with Maj. Mead. Mead told both of them that if Mansingh was ready to surrender, they would give him amnesty as well as pension. Thereafter, letters were also written to family members of Mansingh asking them to make joint effort to persuade Mansingh to surrender. Then, in order to exert pressure, Mead imprisoned Mansingh's family members. That forced Mansingh to agree to surrender. Finally, all these efforts fructified and Mansingh surrendered on 2nd April 1859.

Mansingh's surrender brought the fulfilment of Britishers' main purpose nearer. Mead has accepted it himself that when Mansingh was convinced that they would restore his lost jagir to him he became agreeable to help Britishers in every way in getting Tatya Tope arrested. It is a different matter that Tatya

had no inkling about this conspiracy, otherwise he would have got away from there. One reason of it may be that he was now wholly trusting Mansingh, which proved to be treacherous in the end. Second reason was that Tatya was living secretly in dense forests, hence his intelligence network was not working there. Anyway, Mead was looking at Mansingh's surrender too with suspicion as to whether the latter has really surrendered or there was some hidden motive behind it. Mead knew that it was no child's play to arrest a brave and farsighted commander like Tatya. In the same way as Mansingh is assuring us, Tatya's informers were also active. All those British officers who were involved in this conspiracy were moving very cautiously. They neither wanted to let their game be spoiled nor to give an opportunity to Tatya to get away. On the other side Rao Saheb and Prince Firozshah sent a secret message to Mansingh as to what they should do. In his reply Mansingh asked them to wait for three-four days, he would come himself and meet them. This side, Britishers were exerting pressure on Mansingh. Mansingh hid at a place half of the British force that had come with him. Then engaging Tatya in conversation Mansingh brought him there. After talking a while Tatya slept there. This was the opportune time. Mansingh called the hidden soldiers. They tied Tatya. This incident took place on 7th April 1859. At that time Tatya had a horse, one Gurkha's knife, one sword and hundred and four gold coins with him. Thus, by way of Mansingh's treachery, a great commander was caught by Britishers.

Had Tatya not been a victim of treachery, it was impossible to get hold of him. This has been accepted by those British officers themselves who had been pursuing Tatya continuously. J.A. Sylvester was one of them. He even

compares Tatya with Robinhood. He writes that "Tatya moved about freely in the forests of Padaun and none dared to get hold of him. For the last eight months neither he rested nor allowed us to do so. 'An expert in moving like wind,' Tatya Tope always kept British Generals ready to run. He was Robinhood of India. There were local tribals and some dacoits also in Tatya's army who were good shooters. They fought well in forests. Most of them rode camels and mules. They were mostly barefoot. To save their feet from getting hurt by rocks and stones they tied them with sackcloth. They spent nights in some dense valleys, cooked their food, ate and slept there. But they were always on their toes. In case of an attack they divided themselves into small groups to facilitate running away. Some particular tree was their appointed place where they used to assemble again in a few hours. Once Tatya halted at the very place which a British force had left in the previous evening. Best officers of our cavalry used to pursue him but they always failed to get hold of wily Tatya. No one was able to see him till Mansingh had not deceitfully succeeded in getting him caught."

After being arrested, Tatya, as obvious, was court martialled. The hearing of this case was held in a military court at Shivpuri, near Gwalior on 15th April 1859. The chief justice in this military court was Capt. Vaugh; among other judges were Capt. Pearse, Lt. Archard, Lt. D. Colto and Capt. Webster. Capt. Field appeared as prosecuting counsel and Lt. Gibbon as translator. During proceedings court charged Tatya with :

1. He had led an army against British government from 1st June 1857 to December 1858. Then waged a war with Sir Hurose near Jhansi on 1st April 1859.

2. He had brought leaders revolting against Maharaja Scindia together and led them in attacking the Maharaja in June 1858.
3. He fought with Sir Hurose's army from 14th June 1858 to 21st June 1858 at Gwalior and nearby areas.

In this trial against Tatya Tope there was a prosecuting counsel but no pleader in his defence. Had there been one what could he have done ? These military courts of Britishers were merely show pieces. Their judgements were written in advance. This was the reason that when the case was read aloud for Tatya and he was asked whether he wished to present a pleader, evidence and witnesses in his defence, Tatya Tope said—"I knew it quite well that I should be prepared to face death after waging wars against Britishers, as I have done. I have to say just this in my defence that I only did what my lord Nana Saheb ordered me to do before Kalpi was captured and thereafter I obeyed orders of Rao Saheb. I have done nothing against the State. I have had no hand in killing British men, women and children nor have I ordered to hang anyone." Those British eyewitnesses who were present during the trial said that Tatya did not interrrogate any of the witnesses who had testified against him. He was behaving according to his dignity and valour, was giving precise and clear answers to relevant questions asked politely. A correspondent of 'The Times' writes—"Anyone leaving the court during trial had expression of disdain for Tatya on his face but Major Mead's face reflected feelings of respect for Tatya, which was worthy of a brave man."

As stated above, proceedings in the court were merely a 'drama'. In the judgement Tatya was found guilty of 'those heinous crimes' that he was charged with. Thereafter, Tatya Tope gave his statement, written by Munshi Gangadin in Marathi. On this statement Tatya signed—Tatya Tope, worker

of Nana Saheb Bahadur. But the court took no notice of it. The military court gave the verdict on 15th April 1859 punishing him with death by hanging.

18th April 1859 was the day fixed for hanging Tatya Tope. He was to be hanged not in a jail or secret place but on Parade Ground of Shivpuri (near Gwalior) before everyone so that people got to know about it and they saw with their eyes the result of revolting against Britishers. Thousands of villagers standing on high mounds at some distance around Parade Ground were paying their homage to Tatya Tope. The noose was suspended to poles planted on one side of Parade Ground. Tatya stepped on the scaffold with great patience and courage. Major Mead read out the accusations made against him. Thereafter Tatya's fetters were removed. Then he was tied tightly with the gallows. A smiling Tatya himself put the noose around his neck. Thereafter the scaffold was immediately removed. Tatya's body was hung by the noose. Tatya's dead body remained suspended from poles till evening. The 110th anniversary of Tatya's martyrdom was held in 1969. On that occasion I had seen the place where Tatya was hanged. Some senior residents had told me that Tatya's dead body had remained suspended till the evening. When the contingent that had come to hang him left, people of nearby places came there to have a closer view of Tatya's body. It is said that many people cut Tatya's hair and took it as souvenir and worshipped it. Tatya's hair had become that great hero's heritage for them. Tatya Tope's memorial in Shivpuri reminds us of his martyrdom.

Written Statement in Military Court

In a way the 1857 freedom struggle had ended with martyrdom of Rani Laxmibai and Britishers' victory in Gwalior but with death of Tatya Tope the last spark of that great struggle also extinguished.

Even Britishers admired Tatya Tope's character, qualities, valour, strategy and farsightedness—despite the fact that he was their enemy. British historians' sympathy for him is revealed by questions raised by them over the way the trial against him was conducted and his 'crimes' were found punishable. People have even doubted the identity of the man who was hanged. G.W. Forest and Thomson Henry Thornton have co-authored the biography of Brig. Maj. Mead. Forest comments that Tatya was found guilty of 'heinous crime' because he had revolted against the government. But, to wage wars against a foreign government is no heinous crime even if legally it may be worthy of conviction. But the question is whether 'Law of the Land, (Act XIV—1857)' under which Tatya was hanged, was applicable to Tatya ? What is noteworthy here is when he was born, his rulers were Peshwas, not Britishers.

Much has been written about Tatya's resourcefulness, his cleverness, and extraordinary charm of his personality. But everyone agrees that there was definitely some magnetic power in him due to which people were drawn towards him. Many

indigenous kings had come in his support with their forces. He was able not only to bring peasants to his side but tribals too. Strangest of all was the fact that during the days of Gorilla war many times he had lost everything. But he never lost heart and was able to collect the same amount of war material again and again. Congratulating army officers for arresting Tatya Tope, Sir Hurose wrote in his letter—"As far as initiative is concerned, Tatya Tope was the most courageous, full of patience and resolute man of all rebel leaders who had participated in the revolt. He has had admirable ability to organise forces. You are not even aware as to how much talent he had shown in the so-called Peshwa's army." Similarly, biographer of Mead, George Forest has considered Tatya to be 'the best national leader' and praised his extraordinery ability to organise forces. Tatya Tope is considered to be the best among great commanders and freedom fighters of the country. Even today, one is filled with passion while listening about him. Historians are trying to resolve the controversy relating to whether it was Tatya or someone else, who was hanged.

Tatya's written statement

On 10th April 1859 Tatya Tope had got his statement recorded by Munshi Gayadin. The statement was as follows : My name is Tatya Tope. My father's name is Panduranga. My father belongs to Tehsil Jola of district Patond (Ahmednagar). I am a resident of Bithur. At present my age is about 45 years. I am a servant of Nana Saheb. I hold the position of his companion and body guard.

In May 1857 the collector of Kanpur sent a letter to Nana Saheb in Bithur in which he had requested Nana Saheb to

arrange to send his (collector's) wife and children to Britain. Nana accepted the request. After four days the collector wrote to him again asking him to come to Kanpur with his force. Nana Saheb reached the collector's house with one hundred soldiers, three hundred riflemen and two guns. At that time collector was not at home. He sent a message asking us to stay at his residence. The next morning collector came back. He asked Nana to stay in his own house in Kanpur. We remained there for four days. The collector said that it was his good fortune that we had come for their help. The reason was that their soldiers were not obeying their orders. He also said that in this matter he would write to the General. The General wrote to Lt. Governor of Agra asking him to arrange for salaries of our men.

After two days three regiments of infantry and regiment No. 3 of the cavalry encircled us. Nana and myself were locked in the treasury and the magazine and funds were plundered. They did not leave anything in the treasury. Soldiers gave Nana rupees two lakh eleven thousand but they posted two guards for that fund too. Nana was also under observation of these soldiers. Our soldiers also joined rebels. Thereafter, the entire army departed. Rebels took Nana, myself and our colleagues with them and told us—"Come on! Let's go to Delhi." After covering a distance of six miles from Kanpur, Nana said that the day is almost over, so it will be better to stop here. We will march again in the morning. At night the entire army asked Nana to come to Delhi with them. But Nana declined. Then those soldiers said—"Let's go to Kanpur where you will lead us in a battle." When Nana declined this proposal, soldiers detained him and took him to Kanpur. On reaching here soldiers initiated a war. The war continued for 24 days. On the twenty fourth day the General waved the flag of truce and

the war ended. Nana sent a letter to Wheeler through an arrested woman saying that soldiers are not inclined to obey his orders but if the General agrees, arrangements can be made to send him and his associates to Allahabad. The General replied that he would like such an arrangement. On the same day General sent more than a lakh of rupees to Nana and authorised him to retain this fund. Next day, I got 40 boats ready and sent them off for Allahabad carrying British men, women and children. At this very time a well prepared army, including artillery came up to river Ganga. Suddenly soldiers jumped into water and started killing women and children and set the boats on fire. They destroyed 39 boats but one boat reached up to Kalakankar. That was caught too and brought back to Kanpur. All those found on the boat were also killed.

After four days Nana said that he would go to Bithur to carry out 'Shradh' ceremony for his mother. Soldiers let him go. Some soldiers went with him to Bithur. After the 'Shradh' ceremony they brought him to Kanpur. The amount that was given to Nana on the first day was for distribution among army personnel. After payment of salary, soldiers were asked to fight Britishers in Hasan Fatehpur. Soldiers had heard that British army had reached Fatehpur. They asked Nana to lead them. Nana declined. Nana and I remained in Kanpur. Nana sent Jwala Prasad on his behalf with them. After being defeated, they came back to Kanpur. European army pursued them upto Kanpur. Here they fought again for two hours. Rebel army was defeated again. In this situation I and Nana ran towards Bithur. We reached there at midnight. Rebel army was following us. Next day, carrying some money, Nana reached Fatehpur. Rebel army reached Bithur in the absence of Nana and it plundered Bithur. Nana Saheb, Bala Saheb, Rao Saheb and myself crossed Ganga with our respective

wives. Thus, we reached Fatehpur in Lucknow state and resided in Chaudhari Bhopal Singh's house.

After a few days the 42nd regiment reached Shivrajpur and it wrote to Nana asking him to send some one who could bring them to Nana. I reached there and told them that Nana has called them. Just then, a British army reached there. The 42nd regiment reached Bithur and a battle took place there. I was with them. On being defeated we ran and reached across Ganga.

After a few days Nana conveyed orders to me asking me to go to Gwalior and bring the auxiliary force of Morar for fighting. I went to Morar and brought the auxiliary force to Kalpi. Nana Saheb sent his brother Bala Saheb to Kalpi and on his orders I went with my force to fight against Kanpur. I left some force and an Artillery in Kalpi. The battle in Kanpur continued for eleven days. When the rabel army was defeated all of us fled. Next day we fought in Shivrajpur. In the face of defeat here we ran away. At this time Nana had sent Rao Saheb to Kanpur. I crossed Ganga at Balamau Ghat with Bala Saheb and Rao Saheb. We spent night at Khera. Rao Saheb ordered me to take charge of Kalpi's army and artillery. As per his order I went to Kalpi. After reaching there I received an order from Nana to attack Charkhari. Rao Saheb also was to follow me. I went to Charkhari with nine thousand soldiers, two hundred cavaliers and four guns and fighting began. After four days Rao Saheb returned to Kalpi. After fighting for eleven days I captured Charkhari. I took rupees three lakhs and twenty four guns from the King. At that very time Kings of Banpur and Shahgarh, Diwan Deshpat Kachhwaha, Daulat Singh of Kharwal etc.—many people came and met me. Here only I received a letter from Jhansi's queen that she was fighting

Europeans and she had requested me to come there and help her. I informed Rao Saheb, who was in Kalpi, about it. Rao Saheb came and permitted me to help Jhansi. According to this I reached Jhansi and stayed at Baruasagar. Raja Mansingh came there and met me. Next day, our army fought British army one mile away from Jhansi. At that time we had Twenty two thousand soldiers and 28 guns. We were defeated in this war. Some rebel soldiers fled to Kalpi with four-five guns. I reached Kalpi via Bhander and Kaunch with two hundred soldiers. On the same day Rani reached Kalpi in the evening and she asked Rao Saheb to make some force available to her so that she could fight. Next morning Rao Saheb ordered that the entire army be assembled at parade ground and asked me to go to war with the Rani. I set out with forces with Rani. Fighting took place in Kaunch that continued till noon. We were defeated again. I fled to Churkhi. This is four miles away from Jalaun. My relatives resided here. Later, Rao Saheb fought a battle in Kalpi but lost it. He reached Gopalpur with his force. From there we proceeded towards Gwalior. On way we had to fight Maharaja Scindia for a day. We defeated him. Three days later Scindia's entire army came to Rao Saheb's side. We received a lot of money from Gwalior treasury through the Treasurer Amarchand Bhatia. Salaries were distributed to soldiers. In the meantime, Ramrao Govind also joined us.

After a few days a British army reached Gwalior from Kalpi. Another force came from Shivpuri. A war followed yet again. This continued for four-five days. Jhansi's Rani was killed in this war. Ramrao Govind cremated her dead body. All of us were defeated in this war. We all fled with twenty five guns. We reached Jaura Alipur and halted there for the night. We were attacked the next morning. We fought for one

and a half hour. We rained shells five times. British army did the same four times. We fled, leaving all our guns. Crossing Chambal river we reached Tonk. The Nawab of Tonk fought with us. We snatched four guns from him. We reached Bhilwara with these guns via Madhavpur and Indergarh. British army attacked us there. I fled the same night with the force and guns. At that time I had eight-nine thousand soldiers and four guns. We spent night at Kotra, a place four miles away from Nathdwara. Next day morning we departed towards Patan. We had hardly covered a distance of one mile when a British army confronted us. Leaving our guns we ran away and reached Patan as refugees. This time Nawab of Banda was also with us.

On reaching Patan we conquered its ruler. We captured his guns and magazine and encircled his palace. Next day I asked the king to pay money for army's expenses. He said that he could give only five lakh rupees. Next day, Rao Saheb called the King and demanded rupees twenty five lakhs. The King said that he is unable to give more than rupees five lakhs. But after a short argument it was decided that the King would pay rupees fifteen lakhs. King said that he would go into the palace and send money. He went into the palace and sent rupees two and a quarter lakh and promised to send the remaining amount later. Next day he paid only rupees five lakhs. Major Imam Ali of the 5th cavalry ill-treated the King, so he left the palace at night and ran away. We stayed there for five days. We paid our army personnel three months' salary. A cavalier was paid thirty rupees per month and a foot soldier fifteen rupees. Now we proceeded towards Sironj with 18 guns. When we reached Rajgarh a British army attacked us. Leaving our guns, we ran away and reached Sironj via Nijakila. We stayed at Sironj and then set out for Isagarh. We asked for provisions

there but people did not give. We attacked it and plundered provisions. We halted here. Next day Rao Saheb asked me to go to Chanderi and he himself proceeded from Talbehat road. As per his orders, I reached Chanderi and Rao Saheb reached Lalitpur. Shells were fired at us from Chanderi fort. We attacked the fort. There were Scindia's staff members in the fort who fought with us. After three days, we reached Mangrauli (Mungawali) with eleven guns. We got seven out of these guns in Isagarh and four in Sironj. On way to Mangrauli we faced a British force. Firing continued for some time. Later, leaving our guns we fled.

Two days after reaching Jhakhlaun, we reached Sultanpur. Rao Saheb had also come there. After three days, a British force, which was pursuing us, also reached there. Some shells were fired there. I was not present in this skirmish. Rao Saheb returned to Lalitpur. Next day, he reached Kajaria and halted there. Next day, as soon as we were about to march, a British force came there, fighting continued for an hour and a half. We left all our guns there and reached Talbehat. We halted there for a day and went to Jhakhlaun the next day. From there we reached Itawa, which was twelve miles away. Here we halted. Here we came to know that a British force was coming to encircle us. We left the place that very night. British army came there in the morning. We divided our force. I accompanied Rao Saheb and we reached the settlement of Khargaun via Rajgarh. Our men set Kandla Police station on fire. Rao Saheb tried to stop them but they did not heed. This happened four months ago.

In the settlement of Khargaun there were one hundred fifty foot soldiers of Holkar, a contingent of cavaliers and two guns. We made a lot of effort to bring them to our side. There was barbed wire fence on the way. Our soldiers cut those wires.

They plundered the bullock carts that carried their provisions. They got hold of peons and guards accompanying the carts and kept with themselves. Some guards were hanged. Now we left the road and moved towards West. Next day we were suddenly attacked by a British army. Leaving two guns behind, we fled and reached the bank of Narmada river. We saw that one British Officer was present on the other bank of Narmada with two hundred soldiers. But as soon as they saw our army crossing the river they fled. We plundered Chikla and departed from there at midnight itself. After covering a distance of thirty four miles, we halted at Rajpur. We charged rupees three thousand nine hundred and three horses from its ruler and proceeded towards Chhota Udaipur. Next day a British army raided us. Some of their men were killed and some of ours. From Chhota Udaipur, we went to Devgarh Bari and there our force was divided. There was forest before us. We halted there for two days.

We went to Banswara after our force was reunited here. Our force plundered seventeen camels that were carrying traders' clothes. From here we reached Salomar. We asked Sarsingh, a representative of Udaipur's king to give provisions to us. He sent some provisions and then we proceeded towards Udaipur. On the way, we got news of a British force approaching and we returned to Bhilwara. We halted there for two days and then reached Pratapgarh. Here we fought a battle with the British army of Neemuch for two hours. We had to leave the battle ground at 8 pm. and ran up to a place, six miles away from Mandsaur. Then, crossing three destinations we reached Jirapur. A British army raided us here. We were raided in Chhaprabarod also in the same manner. We ran away and reached Nahargarh. Here nine shells were fired at us. We sidestepped from the range of gunfire. Spent

the night there. Rao Saheb sent Nannu Khan, the Head cavalier to call Raja Mansingh. The King came and remained with us upto a place, two miles away from Padaun. Here we halted. After staying there for two days, we reached a place, eight miles ahead of Kilwari. Raja Mansingh came with us up to the river. He returned after we had crossed it. After covering two destinations, we reached Indragarh where Firozshah met us with his body guards and the twelfth army. Next day, after crossing two destinations we reached Dewas. A British army suddenly attacked us. Some men from both sides were killed. From there we ran towards Marwar. We reached a village which was sixty miles away from Marwar. I do not remember its name. A British army raided us the same night at 4 am. and the twelfth cavalry was separated from Rao Sahab's army. Next day Thakur Narain Singh, Ajit Singh, the uncle of Mansingh and Ganga Singh joined us. They were coming to this side only. I was engaged in an argument with Rao Saheb from Devgarh Bari. I told him that I would get separated from him at the first opportunity as I was too tired. I got the opportunity here and I left his company.

At the time I left Rao Saheb's company, he had six thousand soldiers with him. I had only three men—two cooks and one horse-keeper. I had three horses and one mule with me. Ramrao and Narain were Pandits. Horsekeeper's name was Govind who remained with us up to two destinations and then ran away. We reached the forests of Padaun and met Raja Mansingh. Taking leave of Raja Mansingh, Ajit Singh returned to his house. I and Narain Singh remained with Mansingh. The King asked me, "Why did you leave your army's company ?" I replied, "I was tired of running continuously. It may have been a good or a bad decision, I will remain with you now." I heard later that Rao Sahab's army first went to Patan and then

to Sironj. I told Raja Mansingh that I would send somebody to know where Rao Saheb was and Mansingh liked my proposition. I sent a man. I got the news that Rao Saheb wasn't in Sironj. But Major Imam Ali, Firojshah and the Nawab of Ambapani, Adil Muhammad were there with a force of eight or nine thousand men. Major Imam Ali of the 5th Cavalry wrote to me to come and meet him. The seal of my boss Nana was lost, so I got another one made in Padaun.

After receiving the Major's message I sent a man, who was in the camp of Maj. Mead in Mahudia, to Mansingh. I conveyed through him the contents of Imam Ali's letter and aksed Mansingh whether I should remain here or go elsewhere. Before surrendering before Maj. Mead, Raja Mansingh had consulted me. He had left a man with me and told that "Halt only where he suggests." In reply to my message, Raja Mansingh said that he would meet me within three days and then we would decide what should be done.

Accordingly, he came on third day at night and talked about many things. He said that Maj. Mead was very cordial with him. When I asked about his suggestion as to whether I should remain here or go away, he said that he would reply in the morning. Then I slept and government soldiers came in the night, got hold of me and took me to Major Mead's camp.

(S/-) Tatya Tope, Kamdar

Nana Saheb Bahadur

REMARKS :

"Have you given this statement of your own will, without any pressure or force and whether any promise has been made or temptation given to you for this statement?"—Major Mead.

"I have got this statement written of my own will. Neither anyone has pressurised me nor any promise has been made for this."

(Sd/-) Tatya Tope, Kamdar

Nana Saheb Bahadur

Sd/- Two witnesses

Tatya Tope has recorded the above statement on 10th April 1859 before me without any pressure at Mushayri camp.

(Sd/-) R.J. Mead (Major)

Commanding Field Force

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Renowned author Dr Harikrishna Devsare attempts to portray Tatya Tope's personality in this book.

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